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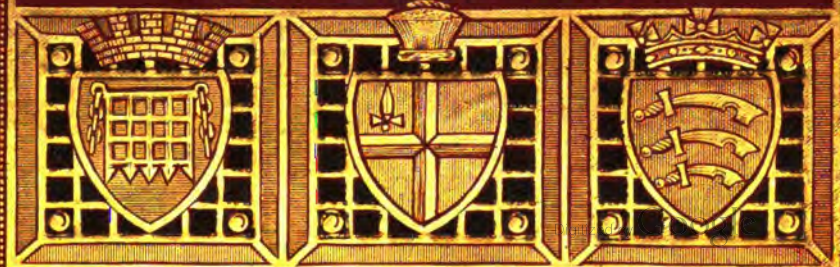
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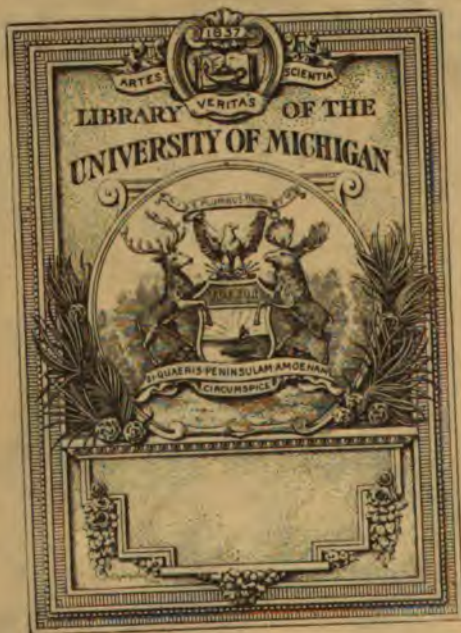


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*'A fantastic reality among the awful columns.'*







# BELGRAVIA

AN

*Illustrated London Magazine*

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# BELGRAVIA.

MARCH 1883.

*Sold of Athens.*

BY JUSTIN M'CARTHY, M.P.

## CHAPTER VII.

### MOONLIGHT REVELS.

WE were a merry party as we set out to mount the Acropolis and to wander by moonlight among the sacred ruins that cover its grassy heights. Lady Lance was with us, and Nellie, of course, and Paul Hathaway, and, to my great satisfaction, Mr. Sarsfield MacMurchad. I was especially pleased to find this youth in our party, for I looked on him as the very man who would see me through the Pollen business. Every one liked MacMurchad. There was something indescribably sympathetic about him which drew the hearts of men and women to him. He was an odd compound of almost lyrical enthusiasm and cool discrimination. He sometimes showed that he had an old head upon young shoulders, but, unlike other possessors of such an endowment, he had none of the ways of the prig. He had done nothing yet of any mark in public life, but he impressed me from the first as one of the children of genius. Mrs. Rosaire once said of him, 'MacMurchad sometimes cries for the moon, but he studies astronomy all the same.' He had a voice of exquisite tone, which in itself went a long way to make people begin by liking him.

'I want to have a word or two with you quietly, as soon as we can get a chance, MacMurchad,' I said to him in a low voice, while we were all interchanging greetings. 'Somewhere on the Acropolis, perhaps, will be best.'

'All right, my boy,' was MacMurchad's reply, and I knew I might count on his finding the best opportunity.

'The others will join us,' Lady Lance said, as we stood on the steps of the hotel. 'Mrs. Rosaire and Athena—and Lord St. Ives, I suppose—will meet us on the Acropolis. Oh, it is all so lovely.

Now let us begin our pilgrimage. Mr. Hathaway, will you be good enough to give me your arm ?'

This was a relief to me ; for I had some misgivings that the honour of escorting Lady Lance might be appointed as mine.

'You will tell me everything and explain everything to me, Mr. Hathaway, won't you ? I have seen all the things here so often, but then I always forget. And you will tell me all about Boston, won't you ? I long to hear all about Boston. Do you know I sometimes feel as if I had lived in Boston. Plymouth Rock, where the dear darling pilgrims landed—that was at Boston ?'

'Well, no ! not exactly at Boston,' Paul began in tones of the gentlest correction ; but we did not hear any more. Nellie, Steenie, and I were together.

'Isn't that just like mamma ?' the graceless Nellie whispered. 'Now that she is going to see the Parthenon, she must begin talking about Boston. If she was in Boston, she would be sure to ask questions about Athens. Where's Boston ? Who cares about Boston ?'

'I say, suppose we get on fast,' Steenie advised ; 'it's precious cold, I think, and, any way, it's slow fun moving along like snails. Let's run away from them.'

'Oh yes, that will be delightful ! You know the way, Kelvin, don't you ?'

'All right ; come along.'

I gave my arm to Nellie, and we three scampered along through the silent streets. We soon left our party far behind. Steenie presently outran Nellie and me by many yards, screaming to us the insulting question why we couldn't manage to move a little quicker. We got on as fast as we could, however, for little Nellie's legs were not so long as those of which Helena boasts in 'Midsummer Night's Dream,' and she could not keep up with a long striding pace. Indeed she soon was hanging on my arm rather than leaning on it, and she was panting and puffing, and all the while trying to sing, and shrieking with laughter. When we reached the broad space, a little plain among the surrounding hills, which holds the remaining columns of the great temple of Jupiter, Nellie fairly gave out, and insisted that she must have a moment's rest. We called a halt, and she sat on a fragment of rock.

We were among the great pillars ; before us was the arch that Hadrian built, and rising above us on one side was the Acropolis. I know of nothing more solemn, more sublime, than that wreck of the temple of Jupiter in its august simplicity. In the midst of a level expanse, arid as a desert and circinctured every-

where by historic hills, stand a few lonely pillars, gigantic columns that look like the Stonehenge of an artistic world. Of that temple, which must have been a wonder of art and artistic devotion even in Athens, only the few upright pillars and one column which has fallen and lies broken on the bare earth—only these survive. There is something awful in their vastness and their loneliness. In the full glare of the Athenian day one cannot cross that dusty plain without stopping to turn a look of reverence on those majestic relics; and now, as the moon throws its softening sanctity over them, they seem to belong to some sacred spiritual time, whereof living men have no memorial but just those ruined shafts that rise dark and stern against the silver light. I own that I thought Nellie and Steenie a little out of place there. Yet not, perhaps, more out of place than that poor pretentious little arch which Hadrian had the weakness to build, on such a spot, in so majestic a presence.

‘Ain’t this jolly?’ Nellie said, panting. ‘I say, I *am* out of breath; my hair is all coming down.’

‘Splendid moon,’ Steenie observes; ‘but after all I don’t think it’s as bright as the electric light on the Thames embankment.’

‘Quite right, Steenie; that’s the way to look at it. And I am sure you will agree with me that these pillars here aren’t in it when compared with St. Thomas’s Hospital.’

‘The pillars are well enough;’ Steenie cast a critical eye up at their solemn stateliness, which almost seemed to lose itself among the stars; ‘but I don’t see the good of a few old pillars standing all by themselves in that sort of way.’

‘Pillars! what pillars? Where? Oh, yes! I didn’t notice any pillars until you two began to talk about them,’ Nellie managed to say. She had taken off her hat, was rearranging her hair, and, I think, judging from the sound of her voice, must have been holding a comb between her teeth.

‘Now I’m right again,’ she said, jumping up and shaking her skirts; ‘let’s have a waltz, let’s have a galop, or something of the sort. Variety!’ she screamed in shrilly mirth.

The humour of the thing caught me. I flung my arm round Nellie’s waist and we whirled away in a fantastic waltz, in and out and among the awful columns of Jupiter’s ruined temple. Steenie executed a fantastic *pas seul* meanwhile, and we all sang or screamed a mad music to accompany our steps. Our laughter, our shouts, our singing, woke the echoes in the otherwise silent streets, and sent their discords far up the Acropolis and even along the sides of dark Hymettus. Looking straight down from



immeasurable height upon the pillars which once did homage to Jupiter was the planet which we call by Jupiter's own name. It might have been the spirit of Olympian Jove himself, gazing with grave and mild rebuke, with look of pity as well as of anger, upon this vile mortal and modern profanation of his shrine.

Little we cared just then for Jupiter or his temple, or the white orb that bears his name. Round and round we danced and danced, until the stars seemed to rock in the sky and the pillars to reel on the earth. At last poor little Nellie declared that her feet were utterly failing her. She came to a dead stand.

'Oh,' she exclaimed, looking piteously up at the steep of the Acropolis, 'I never, never could mount up that dreadful thing to-night! It's no use, Kelvin; I can't go up.'

'Up we go,' I shouted, 'and the shortest and roughest way too. Come along, Steenie; follow my lead.'

I caught Nellie up off her feet; she was not much heavier than a child; and with her securely in my arms I made for the straightest, shortest, and consequently most difficult ascent of the Acropolis.

'Come, Steenie! ride straight. Take all the fences; no looking out for gaps.'

'All right, old chappie; I'm used to this sort of thing.' And Steenie followed, with not by any means unequal steps, so far as mere speed was concerned. I was full of the absurd excitement of the thing, and found all a schoolboy's fun in rushing and scrambling up the Acropolis with Nellie in my arms. Nellie at first screamed and struggled a little, and seemed more frightened than I should have thought it possible for her to be under any circumstances whatever; but finding she had to submit to be carried up the steep, whether she would or no, she soon resigned herself to her danger, and sent forth peal after peal of laughter, only broken by pantings and little occasional screams, as we got higher and higher up the sacred hill. Now the ascent of the Acropolis, even at this point, where chance had directed us to make it, is not a very perilous or arduous piece of work. But one has to scramble over fragments of rock and to flounder in what might almost be called cascades of stones and gravel, and to stumble among tangling beds of wild-grown cactus, and to make his way through masses of scattered ruin. Sometimes one has to leap from a point of projecting rock to the huge base of a fallen column, with a very ravine, like the dried-up bed of a torrent, lying between; sometimes a huge hump of rock and clay stops the climber's course. Despite my vaunting injunction to Steenie, we were often thus compelled to go round and look

for some more practicable path. Every time that I had to make a leap from one point to another, Nellie gave a little scream, and then broke into a peal of triumphant laughter; once or twice I stumbled, and she shrieked aloud. I was all right, however; I knew my way well enough; and the moon was neither uncertain, nor malign, as Virgil once describes it, but was steady, pure, and helpful. My idea was to reach the spot, just outside the gate of the Parthenon's inclosure, where people stop to look down into the amphitheatre of Herod, as it is called. We had already skirted the amphitheatre in our ascent, and had only a few leaps and scrambles more to make. I counted on our reaching the point I aimed at before any of our company could have got there. The road along which they were sure to come winds easily round and round the side of the Acropolis, until it reaches the spot, just at the gate of the temple, from which one can look down into the ruined shell of the amphitheatre. I knew that our company would call a halt there for the purpose of seeing how the amphitheatre looked by moonlight, before knocking at the wooden gate and rousing the guardians of the Parthenon.

'Oh, Kelvin! ain't we ever getting up to this place?' the panting Nellie implored. She looked very pretty in the moonlight, with her hair utterly disarrayed and her eyes half shut, and her head resting on my shoulder. I felt horribly tempted to kiss her, but I didn't.

'All right—just up; here's the road. One scramble more; I see blue water at last.'

This last scramble was a stiff one, and ended in a jump from a high cactus-covered mound of shapeless earth and rock to the smooth stretch of road. Just as I was about to make the spring, I saw that there were some lovers of the moonlight on the road already. I could see one or two standing figures, and one or two seated on fragments of stone just overlooking the amphitheatre. I had hardly time to utter a silent prayer that these might not turn out to be any members of our party, or any people I knew, when I took the leap, and Nellie burst into her familiar irrepressible scream of excitement, and then into her fit of laughter, and I landed with my panting burthen just under the eyes of Athena Rosaire. She was standing up with MacMurchad: Mrs. Rosaire was seated on a huge stone, and Lord St. Ives beside her, almost at her feet.

'Hullo, I say!' was the coherent remark of Lord St. Ives, as he scrambled to his feet, evidently under the impression that I was the vanguard of a band of brigands. Lord St. Ives was still under the belief that the brigands roamed over all parts of Attica.

'Why, it's Kelvin Cleveland,' Mrs. Rosaire exclaimed, 'and Nellie.' I was now depositing Nellie as gracefully as I could upon her feet. 'I never saw anything so funny. What on earth were you carrying the child for? Are you hurt, Nellie dear?'

'Oh no, Mrs. Rosaire, not a bit. Only I was tired, and I couldn't get up this awful place, and Kelvin carried me; I mean Captain Cleveland; Mr. Cleveland. It was such fun—you have no idea.' Nellie was no more abashed than if she had presented herself to the waiting company in the most orderly fashion known to modern conventionality.

I looked towards Athena Rosaire; and as she turned her large eyes upon us I read a wonder and pity and reproach which made my heart sink. It only wanted that to finish me altogether in her estimation. I had really better try to get killed by Pollen somehow or other. I ought to have the choice of weapons, and I had better choose swords and simply spike myself on his point, whether he will or no; if we fight with pistols I can't compel him to hit me. Nothing but my death could possibly restore me to one moment's serious consideration in the eyes of Athena Rosaire. Poor dear little Nellie! A few minutes ago I felt tempted to kiss her; now I fear the vile temptation of my bitter mood would be rather in the direction of boxing the child's ears. Mrs. Rosaire meanwhile was in fits of gentle laughter at the ridiculous appearance which she kindly assured us we presented as we staggered from point to point. 'What a frightful little romp that girl is,' I heard her say in a low voice to St. Ives.

'Why doesn't her mother try to keep her in better order?' St. Ives asked. He had a perfect horror of women, or even girls, who do anything that is unusual.

'Shan't we go in?' Athena said quietly; 'we ought not to lose a moment of the Parthenon under that moon.'

'Some of you had better wait for Lady Lance and the rest, or she won't know where to look for us,' Mrs. Rosaire said.

'Steenie had at once attached himself to Athena, and was already battering at the gate of the sacred inclosure.

'I'll wait for Lady Lance,' MacMurchad said.

'So will I.' This came from me.

'Do, Kelvin,' Mrs. Rosaire called out with the Parthian shot of a laugh. 'If she is at all tired you can bring her in your arms. That will be charming.'

We waited until the little party had entered, and the gate had closed behind them. Then, with the fewest words I could tell my story in, I made MacMurchad aware of the employment to which I desired to devote him. He listened to me, silently smoking his

cigar the while. But he did not listen very patiently. He shook his head and shrugged his shoulders, and made deprecating gestures more than once.

‘I confess to you, Cleveland,’ he said, when I had done, ‘I find it very hard to regard this business in any serious light. I wish I could think of it more seriously, but it all seems too like an absurd farce or burlesque of some kind to be believed in for a moment. The idea of a sane man in this century going deliberately to fight a duel with a cockney tailor!’

‘But he isn’t a tailor.’

‘Well, I don’t know that he is, but he might be a tailor, judging by the looks of him, confound him. Can’t you be sensible, Cleveland, and either say you are sorry for insulting this poor devil, or tell him that you won’t fight and let him do his worst?’

‘You call yourself an Irishman, MacMurchad, and you want to prevent a fight! I thought the bones of the hundred kings, your honoured ancestors, would turn in their coffins if such a thing were to be done by one of their degenerate descendants.’

‘Faith, we have more sense than our ancestors, I hope: and if we feel inclined to part with our lives, we prefer to get rid of them in some good cause.’

‘Still, don’t you think you ought to encourage a fight between two Saxons? If one kills the other there is an enemy the less; if they kill each other there are two got rid of.’

‘I don’t like the business,’ MacMurchad said, evidently not having been listening to my latest observation; ‘and I wish you had asked some one else to take it up for you. I am at a positive disadvantage in this affair, Cleveland. If anything happens it will be all set down to me; they will say that being an Irishman I was longing to get up a fight somehow. That is the sort of confounded rubbish you English are always talking about us. I’ll do it for you, as you ask me, but I don’t like it.’

‘Do you mean to try to make me believe that if you were in my place you wouldn’t do exactly as I am doing?’

‘Well, I don’t know; perhaps I should. But that isn’t any reason why I shouldn’t try to get you to prove yourself a more reasonable human being.’

I shook my head. ‘No use talking now, MacMurchad.’ But I felt his kindness deeply; his friendly, manly ways.

‘I’ll get out of this place when it’s over,’ MacMurchad said. ‘I couldn’t meet—people here, after such a thing.’

‘What people are there whom you would be afraid to meet? What need you care about them?’

MacMurchad's handsome face looked grave. He remained silent for a moment.

'There are some people, Cleveland,' he said with hesitation, 'who have a higher opinion of both you and me than we deserve perhaps, and who will think that we ought to have something better to do with our lives than to risk them in trumpery personal squabbles with travelling tailors and tinkers, and other such folk. If you want to get killed, why don't you get killed in some good cause and in decent company?'

'In the cause of Ireland, for example?'

'The cause of Ireland doesn't call for such sacrifices just now—I don't mind telling you, Cleveland, my good fellow, that I wish to heaven it did: and if it did, that would be a clever tailor who prevailed on me to run the risk of losing my life in a side squabble with him! But I couldn't in any case expect you to take part in the cause of Ireland. As the girl says in Shakespeare, "That's a man's office, but not yours," Cleveland, my boy. But there are better ways of risking your life even here, than in a row with a cockney tailor.'

MacMurchad had evidently made up his mind that poor Pollen must be a tailor.

'The legitimate aspirations of Greece?' I put the question sarcastically.

'Yes, why not? I never could make out, Cleveland, why you are so unsympathetic about Greece.'

'I can very easily make out why you are so sympathetic about Greece, MacMurchad, my heroic youth of the oppressed nationality. I have eyes, my good fellow.'

'Oh, stuff; it isn't *that*.'

'Isn't what?'

'What you mean.'

'What do I mean?'

'Well, I know, of course. You think I want to please Miss Rosaire.'

'I am quite sure you do.'

'Well,' MacMurchad said with a laugh, 'I think we all want to stand as high in her good estimation as we can; and that's just why I don't like this ridiculous business of yours. Suppose you get killed; even a tailor may kill when he has a pistol in his hand. You say you don't care, perhaps?'

'I don't say anything of the kind.'

'I dare say you were thinking of something like it. Now that's all very fine, as far as you are concerned, but it would not



much help me when I had to meet Miss Rosaire, and let her know that I had helped you to get yourself killed by a tailor.'

We could not help laughing, both of us, at the absurdity of the supposed situation.

'She wouldn't care much,' I said, with a bitterness which I could not wholly suppress; 'she would still have the aspirations of Greece to think about.'

'She would be sorry to hear that you had gone off in that way, anyhow.'

'She has not invited me to die in any better way,' I was on the point of saying; but I pulled up in time. 'We are wandering from our subject a little, MacMurchad, don't you think?'

'Why, yes; if it really is of no use trying to reason with you.'

'It isn't of the smallest use; and I'm not going to get killed in this business, MacMurchad. That bit of prophecy I'll venture on.'

'Then, if it must be so, I'll slip away and go down to the hotel, and put myself in the way of receiving any message the old blackguard may have to give. Perhaps he'll go to bed and forget all about it.'

'Here comes Lady Lance with her troop.'

We soon heard Lady Lance's delighted exclamations, 'Oh, how charming! oh, how very, very delightful! A theatre—and they played there; really played there?' She craned over with her double eye-glass to peer down into the amphitheatre.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### HOW WE DID HOMAGE IN THE PARTHENON.

If you would view fair Melrose aright, you ought to visit it, according to the poet who taught us to care about it, 'by the pale moonlight;' and you must 'go alone the while.' To see the Parthenon in its divinest beauty, you should see it by moonlight; and you should either go alone the while or go in companionship with one sympathetic friend. You should not go, as I was going this night, in company with a noisy, diverse, chattering, curious, merry crowd of men and women. There was an unconscious and innocent irreverence about Lady Lance's skipping curiosity which was positively worse than the scoff of the image-breaker or the jester's empty laugh. Her eyes full of eagerness, the simple pertinacity of her inappropriate inquiries, the predetermination to find charm in everybody, the suddenness with

which one impression swept away another, like dust sweeping over dust in a gusty unkempt garret—all this was infinitely more trying to the patience of one who would be reverential if he could, than Nellie's glad indifference to all inanimate objects of beauty or Steenie's schoolboy longing to prove London superior to the whole world besides. Only now and then could I steal a moment, snatch a glimpse, to steep my senses in the unspeakable beauty of the whole place—the rock, the ruins, and the sky.

In the clear atmosphere the moon diffused her light as she is not allowed to do in our northern skies. To say that the moon was all over the sky is a very vulgar way of describing the effect of what I saw; and yet I do not know that I can better describe it. The effect was not that of one cold bright centre of light in a vast dark purple heaven, but of a soft silver radiance suffusing the whole expanse of air, and only concentrating itself at last into one brighter point, and thus forming a planet. The outlines of far mountain ranges were seen in delicate clearness, and a faint sea-line could be discerned. Here and there along the horizon the moonlight lost itself in mist, a silvery poetic mist that blended in tender companionship with the light from the sky. As we approached the steps of the Parthenon, the planet we had seen from the plain beneath hung now just above the immortal temple, and seemed to light and point the worshipping wayfarer to it. Moonlight seems in some strange way linked in the mind with marble. I do not say that the Parthenon was built in order that it might be the embodied glorification of that companionship of ideas; for we know that the steep of the Acropolis was covered with many-coloured structures; but I would willingly maintain that the Parthenon and its sister temples were reduced to ruin by the kindly artistic hand of time in order that in their glorious decay, their proud fall, they might solemnise and consecrate for ever the sympathy of moonlight and marble.

I had seen the Parthenon before by the light of the moon; and I had seen it under happier auspices than those of the present hour. It was while we were stumbling among those very ruins one night, near to the shrine of the Wingless Victory—the Victory which, having settled on the heights of the Acropolis of Athens, was never to fly thence again—it was when stumbling among fragments of fallen marble that I caught Athena's hand to help her, and I could not keep from pressing it, and I felt the pressure returned, and I held the hand in mine for a moment, and our eyes met and rested on each other, and hers were all full of kindness, and, and—I then thought of love. Yes, of love, and of something, too, like doubt, and fear, and compassion, for both of us. Then

the rest of our company came up with us, and we relapsed for the moment into the commonplace. But when we were parting I pressed her hand again, and the pressure was returned softly, tenderly; and I felt sure that in all the world we two stood alone and together. Well do I remember that night. For hours after I could not go home. I walked round and round the square of the Constitution; I returned to the street where Athena lived, where she still lives, and I watched the light in the window which I believed to be hers, after the lover's immemorial fashion; and I found my way to the pillars of Jupiter's temple, and metaphorically took those awful columns into my confidence, and almost fancied that my heart-throbbings ought to reach the stars; and in short I went on in Athens just as lovers do in Kensington and in Bloomsbury, and by the calm Bendemeer. Yet in all the ecstasy of my happiness there was some misgiving too, for I remembered the boding sadness and doubt in the loving look of Athena's beautiful eyes. 'Truly that hour forebode sorrow to this'—as in the words of a song of Byron's; they still seem to me touching and thrilling words—which I once heard Athena sing. In this hour, certainly, I remember that with a peculiar distinctness; and I can understand its warning of sadness. Odd if red-faced old Pollen is to end the whole story for me.

'It's awfully nice,' Miss Lance said to Athena, with an effort to seem as if she really liked ruins and that sort of thing. 'Wasn't it good of Kelvin Cleveland to bring me up all that dreadful way in his arms? I couldn't have come, Attie dear, if he hadn't brought me; I couldn't indeed. I was regularly done up; you have no idea. Isn't he kind? and so awfully strong.'

Nellie put her hand into Athena's as a child might do.

Athena turned and looked down into the girl's eyes. I could not guess what thought came into her mind that suddenly changed the whole expression of her face, as she looked first at Nellie and then at me. Not since that former night on the Acropolis had I seen on her face so strangely blended an expression of kindness, doubt, and compassion.

She kissed Nellie on the forehead.

'I am so glad you came, my dear,' she said; 'and it was kind of Kelvin to bring you.' For the first time since the first day of my return to Athens she had called me by my name. 'But of course Kelvin would take care of you, and he is strong and brave; you could not have one better able to take care of you, Nellie.'

She was speaking in a low, rapid, emotional tone, as if her thoughts were not on the trifling scrap of service which a strong

man renders to a little girl by carrying her a short way up a hill when she is too tired to climb.

'You were always kind, Kelvin;' and she turned suddenly to me with a sad, sweet look. Was it the effect of the moonlight that made it seem as if her eyes were swimming in tears? 'We always thought you so kind and brave, and we were so fond of you. Has he told you, Nellie, how fond we always were of him?' She held her hand out to me, and pressed my hand in hers with a pressure of affection. Was it not here, almost on this very spot, that that first touch of her hand in mine consecrated us as lovers? I could not help it, even though Nellie was looking on; I raised Athena's hand to my lips. Athena did not make the faintest resistance, or look displeased. Her eyes met mine again; yes, there were tears in hers.

Perhaps she noticed something like an expression of wonder on Nellie's face, for she changed her manner in an instant.

'Come, Nellie dear, it is about time for us to get down—Lady Lance is a good way before us.'

'But it is so lovely here, Attie.'

'Let us take one look over Athens before we go.'

This I said because on that other night, that last night, we leaned upon the ruined wall at that side of the Acropolis that looks across the city towards the royal palace. We looked on Athens together. Surely that night must come back to her memory when, from the spot where our hands first clasped in ecstasy, we pass to the spot from which we looked over Athens and compared the light on Lycabettus to the love that burns in a true heart.

'Come,' said Athena.

I found the place, the very spot, the nook in the old irregular wall, in which we stood that night and talked a few lovers' words before Mrs. Rosaire and the rest of our friends came up. Athens lay steeped in moonlight. There was something dream-like, something supernatural, in the appearance of the white city low down with the silvery veil of light around it. Athens seemed to be laid out dead in a shroud of silver lace. But the city was still alive, and not even asleep. The eye could trace the lines of the streets by following the specks of faint orange light which represented the gas lamps of Athens. Faint sounds of street traffic, of carts and carriages, came up to us. In some tumbling rickety lanes that scramble down the side of the Acropolis immediately beneath the spot where we were standing, we could hear the voices of mothers scolding at children and of women calling to each other in some Albanian jargon. Not even Athens by moonlight, and seen from the precincts of the Parthenon, is all poetical. The

scream of the railway whistle was heard as the last train from the Piræus ran into its station below in the city, near that most perfect of all so-called ruins, the temple of Theseus. Worse than that, the bray of an Athenian jackass went up, long, loud, and resolute, renewed again and again, as if the performer were proud of the feat.

'Just as in life,' said a voice behind us. 'Is it not so, divine Maid of Athens? The bray of the donkey is the loudest sound. It mounts the highest and lasts the longest.'

Constantine Margarites stood among us. We were all more or less surprised at the unexpected presence. Nellie gave a little scream.

'Mr. Margarites!' Athena said. 'I am so glad. I did not expect you so soon. Do you bring good news?'

Most undoubtedly there were looks of intelligence exchanged between Athena and Margarites. Her face asked him, as plainly as words could put it: 'Is there anything wrong?' and he answered as plainly, 'No; everything is going well.'

'I have only just reached Athens,' he said. 'I went to your house and heard that you were here; and then—what more natural?—I came to find you. Ah, my friend Mr. Cleveland! Delighted to see you; had you a rough time round Matapan?'

'Hullo, Constantine!' was Nellie's welcome.

'My charming Miss Lance! I had not seen you before.'

'I'm too little to be seen, I suppose; everybody tells me that,' Nellie observed; 'and kind of them it is too. But I don't mind.'

'Sweetest Nellie, I didn't mean that; but you had hidden yourself in the shadow.'

'Shadow—yes, indeed,' the undaunted lass replied. 'I was where I always am and where I ought to be when I come out with Attie Rosaire, in the shadow of her petticoats; in the shadow of her beauty, if you think that's a prettier way of putting it. I don't mind, bless you; I'm used to it.'

'You silly little girl,' Athena said, 'I don't believe any man you know would have you an inch taller. Would you, Kelvin, have Nellie an inch taller than she is?'

'Kelvin wouldn't, I dare say,' Nellie interposed, 'if he had often to carry me up the Acropolis. The less the better of me then, to be sure. Come, Kelvin, out with it.'

'Some girls are tall and some are short;' I began a speech of which I was not very clear about the purport or the completion.

'Ain't we wise?' the irreverent Nellie broke in. 'Don't we know a lot of things? Already this young man knows that some

girls are tall and some are short. Where 'is he to end if he goes on learning like that as he grows old?'

'What Mr. Cleveland meant to say,' Margarites took up the running, 'was this, dear blond miss of Albion, that there is a form of beauty in woman which consorts best with miniature proportions. The violet is as beautiful as the rose, but it would not be so beautiful if it were of such proportions as the rose.'

'Oh, stuff; don't bother,' was the gracious reply of the lady to whom this compliment was addressed.

'Constantine Margarites has too much chat for me,' Nellie confided to me as we descended the great flight of marble steps which come down from the propylæa. Indeed Nellie liked to have a good deal of the chat all to herself. 'I like to walk with you better, because you don't talk such an awful deal.'

'Is that the only reason, Nellie?'

'Well, I don't know. Oh no, it isn't: I do know. I don't like him at all much. He has too many compliments; we all like compliments, girls do, in a general way; but he puts his compliments, don't you know, in a way as if he wanted you to see that he was laughing at you; and we don't like that. Watch him with Attie Rosaire; you'll see he never tries on that sort of thing with her.'

'Confound him!' This was my remark.

'I say, Kelvin, you are letting out, ain't you? But I like it; I like to hear a man when he is in earnest.'

'I really don't know anything against the man, Nellie.'

'Ain't we cautious! As if I would tell on you if you said anything. I don't know anything against him, but I don't like him all the same. He thinks too much of himself. I am sure Attie Rosaire don't care three rows of pins for him, whatever people may say. Don't you think so?'

'Is he supposed to be—to be in love with her?'

'Oh yes, I fancy so; but there's nothing in that. Ain't you all in love with her more or less? But his manner is different somehow; he goes on in a way to make people think he must have had a positive promise from her, which he hasn't, you may be sure. The idea! Fancy Attie Rosaire thinking of that conceited, empty-headed, living waxwork.'

'He's very handsome, Nellie; and I don't think he is empty-headed.'

'Well, anyhow you'll find I'm right,' said the confident young lady, closing the argument.

We had fallen back by a sort of instinctive movement. We had fallen behind and allowed Athena and the Levantine to go on



before us. She and he were evidently deep in conversation. He was bending towards her, pouring discourse into her very ear, and she was listening apparently with the deepest interest. I had no eyes any longer for moon or star, for ruin or hill. As we reached one point where the path slightly turned leftwards, I saw him take her hand in his; and she did not resist; on the contrary, their hands were clasped for an instant as if in mute record of some pledge.

Then she said something to him, and they stopped and waited for us.

‘You are very slow, you two,’ Margarites called to us. ‘The Maid of Athens says she can make due allowance for a proper worship of the moon under auspicious conditions such as those,’ and he waved his hand theatrically at us; ‘but still she is of opinion that it would be well to reach home a little before very midnight.’

‘Midnight—rubbish!’ said Nellie.

‘I am afraid you are tired, Nellie,’ Athena said; ‘why not let Kelvin carry you down?’

I thought at first this was meant in mockery, but it was not; Athena looked quite serious. She really seemed to be concerned for Nellie’s supposed condition of fatigue.

‘Oh, I’m not a bit tired now, Attie dear; and I can walk as fast as you like. But it’s so jolly to be out at this hour.’

Soon we had left the inclosure of the Parthenon, and soon the Acropolis itself, and were on the dusty commonplace road. We united our strength as a party again, and I allowed Nellie to be withdrawn from my special charge in favour of Paul Hathaway, whom she seemed to like.

‘Give me your arm, Kelvin,’ Mrs. Rosaire said. ‘I am tired; I have walked a great deal, for me.’

I knew very well that Mrs. Rosaire must have some particular motive for taking my arm.

‘Don’t let us walk so very, very fast, Kelvin; I am not quite as tall as you, and I am like Hamlet—fat and scant of breath.’ One of Mrs. Rosaire’s pretty little affectations was to pretend that she considered herself too fat. When she made any remark of the kind one necessarily had to look at her graceful figure, with its almost perfect proportions.

So we fell behind a little; I knew we should. Mrs. Rosaire talked about nothing for a moment or two.

‘Kelvin,’ she then said, in a low tone that had a touch of pathos in it, ‘I think I guess from something you said once that you don’t much like Constantine Margarites?’

'I don't much like him, Mrs. Rosaire, but I know very little of him. "I do not like thee, Doctor Fell," as Tristram would say.' Mrs. Rosaire, by the way, never could see the joke about Tristram and his familiar quotations.

'My dear Kelvin, who is Mr. Tristram, and why are you always quoting him? You and Steenie always quote him, and now Athena has taken to quoting him too. But I don't want to talk about him now; I want to ask you about Margarites. Do you really and truly now,—I am very much in earnest, Kelvin, and I ask this of you as of a very dear friend to whom I can trust—do you really know nothing against him?'

'Nothing, indeed, Mrs. Rosaire. I don't like his manner, that's all; I think it is affected and theatrical, but I dare say many people think it fascinating.'

'Still you are not given to speaking against people unless you know something more than that. I got it into my head somehow that you knew of something Margarites had said or done. Men come to know things of each other that a woman has no chance of knowing; and I thought you might perhaps tell me; or give me a hint. I have a serious interest in knowing something about him, Kelvin.'

'I suppose so.'

'You don't ask me what it is, Kelvin?'

'No, Mrs. Rosaire.'

'Well, you men certainly are not as curious as we women, but still I should have thought you would like to know a thing of that kind.'

'Perhaps I can guess without asking?'

She looked quickly up into my face.

'You have noticed, then?'

'If you mean that I have noticed how attentive Margarites is to Miss Rosaire, I think one should be blind who didn't notice it; and I am not blind, Mrs. Rosaire.'

'Do people speak of it?'

'I don't know; I believe so.'

'Now listen, Kelvin;' Mrs. Rosaire spoke with sudden energy, although still in a low tone; 'this is not any of my doing—I want you to understand that I don't like the man, and I don't want Athena to have him. He is rich, but I don't care about a man's being rich.'

'No, Mrs. Rosaire?'

'No, Kelvin. I don't care merely for a man's being rich.'

'Oh!' This was my only comment.

'No; I want Athena's husband to be rich; but I want him to have something more than money.'

‘A title?’ I asked sarcastically, and feeling withal that I was making myself somewhat ridiculous.

‘A title, Kelvin; yes. Why shouldn’t I be frank with you? If I were to give away my daughter to a man who hadn’t a title and wasn’t rich, I would rather give her to you than to any one else; you know that.’

‘I am out of the running, Mrs. Rosaire; don’t think about me. Margarites is rich, at all events.’

‘He is very rich, but I don’t want him for her.’

‘You want Lord St. Ives?’

‘I do.’

She spoke with an air of the simplest candour. She might have been telling me that she had set her mind on some particular house in a street as a future residence.

‘I want Lord St. Ives. He is my choice; he has all my influence. I do so wish Mr. Margarites had not come back quite so soon. I do believe I should have brought Athena round.’

‘Has Lord St. Ives asked her to marry him?’ I made a desperate attempt to persuade myself that I didn’t care; that it was really nothing to me.

‘He has, Kelvin.’ I suppose it was in mere pity that Mrs. Rosaire did not look into my face as she said this. She must have felt the quickened beating of my heart.

‘Well; and she?’

‘She has not absolutely refused him; but now I am afraid the coming of this Margarites will spoil everything. She is so impulsive a girl, and oh, my dear Kelvin, with all her goodness she can be so very, very wilful sometimes.’

‘She cannot care for that man; it is impossible.’

‘You don’t know what women will do when they have set their hearts upon a thing.’

‘What has Athena set her heart upon that that fellow could give her? It isn’t money; I don’t believe she has set her heart upon money. I wouldn’t believe even you, Mrs. Rosaire, if you were to tell me that.’

‘No, Kelvin, I don’t tell you that. But there are things—oh, why must women be romantic and silly? I was so when I taught Athena to love Greece; but I never meant that she should throw herself away for Greece.’

No; I could well believe that. I was almost on the point of saying so.

‘I thought you might have known something about this man, Kelvin, and that you would have told me.’

‘So that you could tell it to Athrena, and perhaps turn her against him?’

‘Yes, Kelvin.’

‘She would have felt grateful to me for such a piece of service, would she not?’ I asked bitterly.

‘Oh, what would that matter? Besides, she would feel grateful to you after; at the right time; when she came to think over what she had escaped.’

‘And what she had got perhaps? The title, for example, Mrs. Rosaire?’

‘Lady St. Ives now; Countess of Marazion afterwards. It would sound well,’ Mrs. Rosaire said, meditatively.

‘So sorry I can’t assist you, Mrs. Rosaire. I am sorry I don’t know anything to Mr. Margarites’ disadvantage. If he had only committed a murder or two; or even a forgery; and had confided the secret to me! But then I suppose I couldn’t have told it.’

‘Oh yes, surely, in such a case as that,’ Mrs. Rosaire said. When Mrs. Rosaire was thinking seriously over any subject she had not much perception of sarcasm. She had a charming laugh; I don’t think I ever knew a woman with so pretty a rippling laugh; but the mirthful sound was generally inspired by some conceit of her own. This time she was quite serious, and did not perceive in the least that I meant to be sarcastic. ‘In such a case as that, Kelvin, where the happiness of very old friends was concerned, you surely would feel at liberty to tell all you knew to one who had a right to know it, like me?’

The happiness of old friends! Mrs. Rosaire did not appear to think that the happiness of one of her old friends, myself to wit, was a matter that called for any consideration.

‘Well, Mrs. Rosaire, the question doesn’t arise. I know nothing whatever against Mr. Margarites.’

‘I am so sorry. If you should find out anything——’

‘If I should, then I will consider what I ought to do. But I am not likely to find out anything.’

‘Kelvin, you are very unsatisfactory; and disappointing. That I *must* say. I sometimes don’t think you have any interest in us at all; you don’t care whether things go well or ill with us. As for me, I don’t mind; at least I am prepared for it. I know you will never forgive me; I know you hate me; although everything I did was meant for the best, and *was* for the best. Yes, *was* for the best. But you might think of *her* welfare. Well—there, I forgive you, and we won’t quarrel.’

I knew then that our conference was over, and that we were to press forward a little and come up with the rest of the company.

I could see Athena in front, walking between Lord St. Ives and Margarites; and we presently passed Nellie and Hathaway. Paul was discoursing to her in a low tone of the stars and the myriad populations that probably dwell in them, and of the future life for us and them, and the possibility of our all uniting one far-off day in an eternal and glorified brotherhood. He was animated, for him; his delicate complexion glowed slightly, and his eyes sparkled like two of the stars to which he now and then looked up. Nellie was listening; actually listening with the breathless attention of a child who hears a ghost story. Her eyes were wide open, and were fixed, not on the stars, but on Paul Hathaway, and her lips were parted.

We all dispersed at Mrs. Rosaire's door. Athena gave me her hand with an expression of friendly, kindly sympathy.

'Good night, Kelvin;' she still allowed her hand to rest in mine; and then I heard the words, low, sweet, and tender—'You forgive me, Kelvin, don't you?' And then Lord St. Ives came to bid her good-night, and I saw no more of her.

I walked home alone, her words ringing in my ears and in my heart. I had heard the words; that was certain. 'You forgive me, Kelvin, don't you?' What did these words mean? Why had she changed towards me all in an hour? Why ask me to forgive her? Was, then, her act irrevocable? Was she gone from me for certain and for ever? I write down in this story what I really did and really felt, leaving it to the reader to think of me as he pleases and to laugh at me if he will. I now tell what happened to me that night as I was crossing the great square of the Constitution, now a moonlit desert. This thought of Athena, lost to me beyond hope, lost to me for ever, filled my soul, and I found myself crying out, 'Oh, Athena, my love, my beautiful love!' and then a great sob like the sob of a woman choked my voice, and the whole scene for a moment disappeared from my wet and blinded eyes. The sound of that womanish sob aroused me to self-control once more, as a sleeper is sometimes awakened by his own cry or laugh; and I crossed the square to all appearance the man I was before. I don't mind writing down my confession of that sob; if it makes me seem weak and womanish, a bearded man of the world bursting into hysterical grief, let it at least be an evidence of the strength of my strong love.

For I assumed that Athena's kindness of manner was only a proof that she had given her promise once for all to some one else, and that her heart was pained for me, knowing my pain, and that she tried to soften the blow by a genial word of farewell. But I could not as yet understand or even guess why the change had

been so sudden ; why she was so cold to me at the beginning of the evening's expedition, so friendly and tender at the close.

I had not much time for thinking over all this, for I had not been long in the hotel when MacMurchad entered. I knew by the look of his face as he came in that Mr. Pollen was standing to his guns. MacMurchad's face was singularly expressive, and was the very mirror of his mood. Its habitual expression was one of dreamy abstraction which a word from the living world could at once change into a sunny brightness. But when he did look grave his face was overcast with a vengeance. In complexion he was nearly as dark as an Italian or a Spaniard, and when anything depressed him he seemed steeped in profoundest gloom. I once told him that his face reminded me of some of the lakes in his own island, all dimpled with dancing ripples and flecked with laughing sunbeams one minute, and lying dark and sombre under cloud and mist the next. This time he had on his gravest look, and I knew that we were in for it.

'All right, my boy,' MacMurchad said ; 'or all wrong, rather. Everything is arranged.'

'Glad of it. Swords, pistols, battle-axes, quarter-staffs, Gatling guns, or what ?'

'The old lines of the constitution. Your enemy, I fancy, isn't much of a hand at any weapon ; we have decided on pistols. But you would never guess where the place of meeting is to be. Come, do try and guess.'

'Top of Lycabettus ; King's garden ; roof of Dr. Schliemann's house ?'

'No ; yours is to be an encounter worthy of Miltiades ; you are to fight on the plain of Marathon.'

'Come, MacMurchad, you are not serious.'

'By Jove, but I am, though. It's all planned very knowingly. Mr. Pollen will give out that he's going to Eleusis or somewhere to see the sun rise ; he'll take his second along with him. That stout English-looking dragoman from this place—Aristoboulos, isn't his name ?—is arranging it all, and they'll get off wholly unsuspected. Then we'll start off in a different direction, and after a while we'll all turn and make for the Marathon road, without any of the English folk here having the faintest idea of what we were about.'

'Who is Pollen's second ? An Englishman ?'

'No—a Greek ; a man called Margarites. A good-looking man.'

'Margarites ! Is that fellow to be in it ?'

'Yes ; it was he started the Marathon idea ; and it isn't half a bad idea, if you come to think it over. For one thing, we shall have it all to ourselves ; the ordinary English tourists don't ven-



ture to go there yet; it still seems to them to be populated by brigands. So, as Mrs. Rosaire isn't personally conducting her friends there until Thursday, we are free from any chance of any one coming on us.'

'We shall have ample room and verge enough, as Tristram would say,' I observed.

'Excuse me, Cleveland,' MacMurchad said with a certain courteous hesitancy, 'I think these words are Gray's.'

'All right; Tristram only comes in as part of a small joke of ours. Marathon? Well, I dare say Marathon is as good a place as any other when one gets over the first shock of the absurdity of choosing such a spot for such a performance.'

'We start before daybreak; Aristoboulos is to call us. But I don't mean to go to bed; I couldn't sleep with this cursed business on my mind.'

'I'll try to get an hour's sleep or so, and I strongly advise you to do the same, MacMurchad.'

'I never care about sleep. I am used to doing without it, you know—the all-night sittings.'

'True, true; I had forgotten that.'

To fight a duel on the plain of Marathon—a duel with Mr. Pollen! Is the whole thing a dream, a nightmare? Well, perhaps there is some consolation in the thought that if old Pollen should manage to pick me off, Athena Rosaire may think there was something heroic in one's dying anyhow on that consecrated plain. 'By those who perished on Marathon!' Demosthenes exclaims; I remember that much of him. Is the piety of a future Greece to be allowed the opportunity of including me in the appeal?

## CHAPTER IX.

### ONE WHO FELL ON MARATHON.

I THINK MacMurchad was in the right with regard to the question of sleep or no sleep. I lay on my bed without undressing, and after becoming at first so wonderfully wakeful that it seemed as though, like Glamis, I had murdered sleep, I suddenly dropped down into a heavy slumber from which I was roused by a knocking at my door that appeared to have come the very moment I closed my eyes. It was the faithful Aristoboulos who knocked. I had slept my measure of sleep, and I was expected, like the ducks of the nursery legend, to come and be killed. I felt sickly, shaky, unrefreshed; and I found MacMurchad in the hall looking fresh, light, loose-limbed, and ready for anything, and smoking a cigar with the

apparent enjoyment of one who is taking his first puff after a long abstinence. He told me that he had done nothing but sit and smoke since I left him.

We sallied forth into the gaunt wind-swept streets. It was four o'clock, and there was no sign of day. A few flickering gas lamps mocked the straining eyes of the belated or too early passengers. The sky was as dark as a wolf's mouth, or as the sky of a London December; the moon had long since disappeared. Everything looked cheerless and cold.

We passed through the square of the Constitution, on which I had seen the moon shining only a few hours ago, and where my love and pain had found a sudden utterance. Making northward, we skirted Lycabettus, on whose top the light was burning like a star, and when we had got a little way to the other side of Lycabettus we found two men in fustanellas waiting for us with mules. The animals, to do them justice, were big and strong, but their countenances seemed to wear an expression of unalterable gloom. They hung their heads down, not as in weakness but as if in deliberate protestation of their utter disregard for all the joys and prospects of a hard and grinding world. They bore the high, hard, semi-oriental saddle, and their bridles and stirrups were of simple rope. You put your feet into two loops at the ends of a piece of rope; you clutched another piece of rope in your hand in lieu of curb and snaffle. When we were mounted, our attendants banged our animals behind; they answered with a protesting groan, and then off we went. Aristoboulos did not afford himself the luxury of stirrups. He threw himself across his mule anyhow, and impelled the animal to speed by incessant and noisy clappings of his legs to the poor brute's sides. The mere physical exertion of all this clapping of his legs must, one would think, soon wear out the stoutest rider, but it seemed to be as easy as breathing to our gallant Aristoboulos.

'Are these confounded Palikars to come with us all the way?' I asked. Aristoboulos explained that we should have to put up with their company, because they were supposed to be in charge of the mules, and it did not seem quite certain to the proprietors of those animals that, if we were trusted with them, we might not gallop off to England, and never send the precious roadsters back.

'Are they to see us fight, to see us foin?' I further asked, quoting from *Mine Host of the Garter*.

Aristoboulos caught the word 'fight,' and made out my meaning. He never would condescend to ask for an explanation of anything. He assured me that the men in the white petticoats would regard the whole affair as in no sense any business of theirs,

and that we were free to kill ourselves as much as we pleased without the smallest chance of interference on their part.

'Besides, perhaps we may not have to fight,' Aristoboulos suggested, with a queer look on his smug face.

'What do you mean by that? You haven't been telling anyone?' A hideous idea flashed across me. Suppose Aristoboulos had thought it his duty to give a hint to the Rosaires? Mrs. Rosaire was just the woman to get into a carriage and drive off at full speed to the place of meeting, and fling herself between the combatants. This would delight her; it would be exactly in her line. She would suffer any amount of fatigue for such a pretty effect. Or supposing she took a less romantic view of her duty, and went and roused the English Legation and secured the intervention of the mounted police?

Aristoboulos hastened to protest that he had kept our counsel like a man of honour and a descendant of Pericles. He ascribed his doubts or hopes as to the possibility of a peaceful settlement to his interpretation of the character of Mr. Pollen.

'I travel often with old English gentleman like that; I know them well. They sensible men; they not fight. Mr. Pollen? Well, he wake in the morning; he think he make of himself dam fool, as he will say; he see no good in fighting; he think it better make apology. Mr. Pollen too much sense, I think; he not fight.'

Unfortunately, in this case Mr. Pollen had no apology to make; to me at least.

'Would you think of qualifying in some way what you said to Pollen?' MacMurchad asked tentatively, as we mounted slowly a hilly part of the road.

'My dear fellow, I haven't anything to qualify. I said he was a vulgar blackguard, and I still think that he acted in that case like a vulgar blackguard. "What I says I says, and what I says I sticks to;" and so there you are.'

'Well, of all the obstinate, pig-headed——'

'Meaning me, MacMurchad?'

'Why, no; as it happens, I didn't mean you that time—my attention was called away to this confounded mule. But really, Cleveland, I must say that even if I had been addressing myself to you, I don't think I should have been altogether out of it. Certainly, if any bitter enemy of yours were just now to charge you with obstinacy and pig-headedness I would try to refute the charge, but I should be a little puzzled for the moment how to set about it.'

And now the day began to broaden over the plains and the

hills, but it did not promise to be a day of brightness. The beauty of the past evening seemed likely to be succeeded by grey skies and even by driving mists. We are destined to see Marathon under an atmosphere that would have better suited the blasted heath at Forres where the witches brought Macbeth to a stand.

Now that the light had come we could see that the road, which was not a bad one for that region, ran for the most part between low-lying hills, some bare, some well tufted with trees and brushwood. We had already left everything like cultivation on a large scale behind us, and had passed one or two groups of cottages which it would be hardly reasonable to call villages. At one point the road turns suddenly and grows narrow; the walls are low, there is a small rude bridge over the bed of a mountain torrent, and there are wooded hills closing in on either side. The road becomes a mere gorge in the hills; the spot is singularly picturesque.

Aristoboulos pulled up his mule.

'Gentlemen, this is the pass of Pikermés. Here the brigands came upon the English gentlemen who were coming back from Marathon, you remember, and took them off into the mountains and killed them.'

It was impossible not to feel startled at the words; the story at the time had thrilled all the world with horror. I was at sea then, and I read every detail of it with absorbed and awe-stricken interest. Who could ever forget the tale told by the recovered memorandum book of one captive—Mr. Lloyd, I think it was—that tale of heroic endurance, of the uncomplaining cheerfulness with which the destined victims helped each other to bear their fate? This then is the very spot where these brave young men, returning in their heedless high spirits to Athens after having looked on Marathon, were suddenly stopped by their pitiless enemies. We were all silent for a moment.

Then Aristoboulos said, with a reassuring chuckle which sounded unearthly:—

'No brigands here now, gentlemen. We not care for brigands now; not one left in Attica.'

'But is that certain?' MacMurchad asked. 'People tell me quite the contrary.'

'Then you not believe them, sir. I tell you there are no brigands in Attica. I am responsible for what I say.'

Just at that moment a shrill cry was heard, and a man was seen standing on the wall that bounded the road a little way ahead of us; he had in his hand what seemed to be a gun, and he pointed it at us. He wore a sort of sombrero hat which flapped down over his head. We could see that there were other men farther on, and

mules and horses. The man on the wall cried out some words in Greek, the meaning of which even I could distinctly make out, and which were assuredly equivalent to 'stand and deliver.'

MacMurchad did not understand any Greek, but he could not fail to attach some meaning to the attitude and the gestures of the man. He had a revolver out in an instant, and was driving his mule forward. I drove my beast on too.

'Out with your revolver, Cleveland,' MacMurchad cried; 'these fellows are damned cowards if you go at them.'

'Stop, stop!' Aristoboulos shrieked. 'Not brigand; no brigands in Attica.'

Then a shout of laughter came from the man on the wall, and he seemed to be dancing there for very glee. He leaped down and danced about the road, shaking in ecstasy of mirth. 'A mad-man' was now our thought; the more especially as we saw a steady-looking personage on a sober mule come trotting up towards him as if in anxiety for him—one of the men no doubt whom we had just had time to glance at as we first received the summons to stand. But to our utter bewilderment the maniac shrieked out our names; and suddenly becoming sane and sober, came gravely towards us, bowed several times, turned up the flapping leaves of his hat, pulled down his coat collar, and was Constantine Margarites.

'Didn't I give you a glorious fright?' he exclaimed. 'I say, what a story for Athens! It was such fun! I say, Cleveland, when I saw your friend pull out his revolver, I thought I should have died of laughing.'

'It might have turned out anything but a joke,' I said. 'I fancy MacMurchad was very much in earnest, and I don't think he would have missed his mark, Margarites.'

'By Jove, it might have turned out a very ugly piece of business,' MacMurchad said. 'I don't quite like jokes of that kind.'

'Really—no? I thought Irishmen were always ready for fun. Bah! piff-paff! there wasn't a scrap of danger. There was always plenty of time, and destiny does not intend to have me shot in mistake. I never feel any fear of that kind.'

'No,' MacMurchad said in a low tone, 'I should think destiny has quite other views concerning your way of going out of the world.'

'Do you know whom we have got yonder?' Margarites asked, nodding at the man on the mule, who had now halted a short way in front of us.

'Not I. Any other practical joke in store?'

‘Aha—you don’t like my practical joke? You think people will say you were afraid of the brigands. You all did give a little start. No?’

‘Who is our friend yonder?’

‘Your friend the enemy, Mr. Pollen.’ Margarites explained that he and Pollen had reached this spot by arrangement, but that when they had got here the men with their mules did not seem very certain about the rest of the way, and as they knew they were rather early, they thought it just as well to wait until we should come up. ‘We’ll keep a little ahead of you,’ Margarites further suggested, ‘and it will be all right. We may as well be good companions until we get to Marathon.’

‘In heaven’s name,’ I asked, ‘why not put the whole thing through here, without going any farther and desecrating Marathon? We have all the place to ourselves.’

‘No, no, that would never do,’ Margarites replied. ‘That would not satisfy my principal. He is a very brave man, a true British hero, an honour to his country, and all that; but he does not precisely like the idea of being wounded and not having the surgeon near. So like you Englishmen; such brave cool consideration, always making steady preparation beforehand against unnecessary risk. Oh, quite right; I admire it of all things. So we have arranged for a surgeon—a pair of surgeons. But we appointed to meet them at Marathon, and at Marathon they will be. They are there already, I suppose. So *fouette, cocher*; I go to keep up the courage of my principal. I tell him what a splendid shot you are, and what a vindictive fellow. Oh yes, I encourage him, I can tell you.’

He mounted his mule and pushed briskly forward, and we saw himself, his principal, and their guides in rickety motion along the road in front of us.

‘This will be a hideously ridiculous business, MacMurchad. We shall have a whole crowd; it will be like a prize-fight.’

‘Yes—I don’t like it at all; and I don’t like that Greek fellow. There seems something malicious about him. Lucky that you were so quick to recognise him,’ MacMurchad said to Aristoboulos, who had just come alongside.

‘It was not that I recognised him, sir; I did not recognise him. But I knew he could not be a brigand. I told gentlemen there were no brigands in Attica now; I am responsible for that.’

I don’t believe that if a troop of genuine brigands had come down upon us from the hillside Aristoboulos would have admitted that they were brigands until they had actually cut the throats of some of us.

‘I suppose there must be something in him, under all that mask of levity,’ MacMurchad said thoughtfully. ‘They say he is positively a power among the islanders.’

‘They say? Who say this, MacMurchad?’

My question seemed to embarrass him a little. He reddened slightly, and he evaded reply for a moment by indulging in a few muttered imprecations against his mule.

‘Well, I have heard people say it; I have heard Miss Rosaire say it for one.’

‘That he was a man of influence among the islanders?’

‘Yes; she said he could do a great deal, almost anything, with some of them; and that he is a man of strong purpose and courage, and all that sort of thing.’

‘Courage—yes; I have no doubt he has courage enough; but as to the strong purpose—well, she ought to know. He is handsome and clever, and I suppose he is the sort of man some women would credit with all possible gifts and merits.’

I said this rather to myself than MacMurchad. Some women; yes, certainly. But was Athena one of the women whom I should have expected to find thus easily gained over? No, I should not have thought so; and yet my mind began to misgive me. Is this then the young hero who is to do the great deeds for Greece? Is there the soul of an Alcibiades under that Alcibiades’ face? I clenched my hand and set my teeth hard at the bare thought of Athena Rosaire consenting to accept the admiration of such a man.

‘I must say I don’t like him,’ MacMurchad said, as if he were following my thoughts. ‘But I don’t know why. I suppose he’s too good-looking, Cleveland, and makes the women admire him, and cuts us out.’

I never saw a creature inspired by such mad fantastic humours as Constantine Margarites that morning. I don’t know whether the prospect of seeing any fellow-creature killed had quickened his soul with an overpowering sense of delight, or whether he was in particular hope of seeing me killed, or whether he found enjoyment in merely trying to torment and frighten my heroic adversary. Whatever the cause, there was apparently no bound to his ecstasy. His spirits communicated themselves even to his mule. He made that animal gallop and curvet and rear as if he were a fiery, untamed Arab. I could no more get my beast to perform such feats than if he were a rocking-horse. Margarites sometimes took it into his head to ride his mule side-saddle fashion. Then it pleased him to favour us with imitations of the way in which the ladies of various countries sit their horses. I confess I could not



help laughing at his living picture of the style of a stout English matron in Rotten Row, and then his sudden change to a lively impersonation of a French grisette out for a holiday and mounting a donkey for the first time. He sang songs in various tongues; he declaimed long passages from Homer; he sometimes left us and forced his mule to climb some steep, and for a time disappeared altogether, until at a sudden turn of the road we saw him coming down upon us full tear. Once he had got off his mule and climbed the hillside until he came to a great fragment of rock, on which he stood gesticulating. When we came near we found that he was assuming the attitude, gestures, and tones of an orator, and was declaiming with really magnificent effect those lines from Demosthenes' great speech of which I had been thinking this very morning, the lines which contain the appeal to the memory of those who fell on Marathon. As Margarites stood on the height in the keen bluish-grey of the early morning, with his dark eyes flashing like stars and his slender graceful figure flung into the most picturesque attitudes, and his strong thrilling baritone voice waking the echoes round, one might have thought him some patriot orator of the grand old days, striving to arouse his countrymen to a sense of coming danger. For the moment it was impossible not to fancy that he might be capable of the great things which, I thought with a sinking heart, Athena looked for.

'There's something in him, for all his tomfoolery,' MacMur-chad said decisively.

'I suppose so—confound him.'

'Marathon, Marathon!' Constantine shouted as we came near, dropping his Demosthenic part, and pointing to the plain that spread out just beneath us.

Yes; it was Marathon. A broad, lonely, melancholy plain, spreading from the mountain ranges on our left to the sea on our right; the plain meeting the sea on such equal terms that only the slenderest fringe of white foam broke upon the shore. The broad bay is an almost perfect horseshoe in shape. Easy work for an enemy's fleet to pour troops ashore there, but when the invaders have set their feet on Marathon, are they not ominously confronted by those ranges behind ranges of sentinel mountain? In those narrow rugged passes brave men and few might stay an army. Bare and grim looks grass-grown, weed-grown Marathon in this chill morning. No living creature, except a wandering goat or two, stirred on that lone expanse. In the midst of the plain rises the historic mound piled to the memory of the heroes, the 'unnamed demigods' who fell there; a mere hillock of earth covered with thick ragged grass, and overgrown here and there

with scrubby little trees and brushwood. I had seen Marathon before, but only from the top of Pentelicus; I had not set my foot upon the sacred plain itself. Truly the view from Pentelicus is far more beautiful and complete. From Pentelicus one looks over a vast expanse of land and sea—mountains here, islands there; and just beneath his feet is the blue crescent of the bay of Marathon, and the plain, looking yellowish and sandy from that height, and the grassy mound that seems as if a flower-pot might cover it. Still, to look down on Marathon is not the same thing as to stand on the very grass that grows above the dust of its heroes. And to think that I should stand here for the first time as a principal in a ridiculous quarrel which even death itself could not clothe with dignity!

‘Who’ll fight for Greece? Who’ll die for Greece?’ Margarites exclaimed; and he sprang from the height on which he had been standing and rushed across the plain, as though he were in very truth leading a last charge against some invader.

We saw Mr. Pollen getting slowly off his mule. He looked very much amazed at the conduct of his second.

‘Let’s get this foolery over as quickly as possible, MacMurchad,’ I said, tumbling myself off my mule; dismounting would be far too fine a word to apply to such a descent from such an animal. ‘Then we can look at Marathon. I couldn’t bring myself to look at it while this beastly thing is hanging over our heads; it seems a desecration.’

‘I go catch Mr. Margarites,’ Aristoboulos volunteered.

Margarites had by this time scrambled to the top of the mound, and appeared to have forgotten all about us. Brought down at last from his heroic height, he condescended to assume his ordinary manner, and to enter into what Tristram would call ‘the necessary arrangements’ with MacMurchad. The guides, or muleteers, or whatever they were, occupied themselves in looking after their beasts, and did not seem to take the slightest interest in our movements. The expected surgeons did not seem to have arrived, and no one suggested waiting for them. Mr. Pollen stood apart from every one, with his nose high in air and his eyes staring at nothing. There was something about the very rigidity of his attitude which convinced me that he was nervous, but that he was determined not to let it be seen. I have no doubt Margarites had been delighting him all the way with tales of my deadly skill at every weapon and my implacable resentment. If he only knew how entirely safe he was from any bullet of mine!

How was it with me? Well, I began to feel decidedly nervous. A bullet sent even by a stout man with a red tie and a big solitaire

may have its billet, and, for aught I knew to the contrary, Pollen might be a dangerous enemy in a quarrel. For the first time the thing began to seem real; I began to feel it strangely borne in upon me that I might have to die before five minutes had passed. Involuntarily I looked across the melancholy plain above which the mist-charged clouds were driven. 'Grey Marathon,' as Byron calls it, its skies looked grey indeed now; the green of its grass was faded and gave only another suggestion of age and loneliness. Well, I have stood on Marathon; that is something. I cast my eyes across it once more.

'I am strongly of opinion that one exchange of shots ought to settle this thing,' I heard MacMurchad say. Apparently Margarites and he had been arguing the point.

'I have spoken with my principal,' Margarites answered, in tones of cool contempt; 'he is not unwilling, if you actually press for it. But you must understand distinctly that the proposal does not come from us.'

'Do you agree to it?'

'Well, we submit to it, if you press for it; but we don't ourselves care to come all this way for nothing.'

'Very good,' MacMurchad said, with scarcely suppressed anger. 'I withdraw the proposition altogether. It was entirely my own. Now I make another proposition; that we go back to the good old fashion of the duel, and that the seconds take part in the business. Do you accept that proposition, Mr. Margarites? If you do, it can't well be said that any of us came here for nothing.'

'Stop!' I said; 'I positively refuse to listen to any such proposal. I will have no part in anything of the kind. Rather than agree to it, I will apologise to Mr. Pollen and go off the ground.'

'Oh! a very sensible idea too,' Margarites said. 'You English—what a practical people you are! Shall I tell Mr. Pollen?'

'Do nothing of the kind, sir. I only insist on the quarrel being kept to the men who have quarrelled; that's all. Now let us get on quickly, in heaven's name.'

'In hell's name would be a better word, I think,' MacMurchad said, looking fiercely at the smiling Margarites.

'Let gentlemen invoke any name they please, each for himself,' the radiant Greek blandly observed.

We were placed in position. It made me feel horribly uncomfortable to see that red face and those staring eyes straight in front of me. I was quite determined to fire wide of Pollen anyhow, so that my position was that of a man standing up to be shot at; there was no combative element in it to stir the blood and quicken the pulses. Only the nerves were touched by it,

and my soul now knew but one longing—to have the whole thing over. MacMurchad once gave me a description of his sensations when he was about to make his maiden speech in the House of Commons. As the fearful moment drew near all thought of success or failure had died within him; all the labours of long preparing days, all the hopes and dreams of a conquered House and a delighted constituency, were gone; he was only conscious of one mere ignominious longing to have the thing over, to be done with it, to be rid of it anyhow. I felt just like that now; I thought of MacMurchad and his speech at the moment.

The word was given; and at the instant I heard shouts and, turning half round, I saw some figures galloping at fierce speed across the plain towards us. The surgeons perhaps—if so, just in time. I fired far afield of Mr. Pollen, and in the same instant I felt as if some one had struck me a heavy blow on the shoulder; not a sharp stinging pain, but just such a sensation as would come from the stroke of a heavy club; and it positively was not until I heard the sound of a pistol that I knew Mr. Pollen's bullet had found me. I saw the sky going up and down, and to all appearance descending finally on me, and the plain was reeling under my feet, and confusing noises were singing in my ears, and then a strange sweet sense of relaxing drowsiness came over me, and I saw neither sea nor sky nor Marathon.

*(To be continued.)*

### Budell's Proposal.

THIS time two years ago our Square Club was flourishing; now I am sole member. Budell, Marby, Smithers, and myself had formed ourselves into a private bachelors' club for the purposes of whist and other intellectual occupations, and a very good time we contrived to have together. We hadn't many rules and bye-laws for our club. We were sworn bachelors, and each of us had to allege a reason why he did not intend to wed; but we had so far recognised the possibility of a change in our sentiments as to solemnly bind ourselves to inform the club at once if we should ever meditate 'halving our pleasures and doubling our expenses.' Smithers said he hadn't time to marry; I was too poor; and Marby, who was regarded as our romantic member, gave us indefinitely to understand that 'blighted affections' stood between him and the hymeneal altar. Budell at first laughed at the idea of assigning a reason; and he wished to allege as his that he hadn't met Mrs. Budell yet. That was unanimously rejected by the rest of the club; whereupon he insisted upon our accepting as an alternative that he was afraid of ladies. We were willing to stretch a point in favour of Budell, who was one of the jolliest possible fellows at a bachelor supper, and so we received this second reason. For the rest we nobly resolved not to fly, but to withstand temptation; our maxim was that every lady is charming so long as one is not married to her; and we were all ready to go into society, and even sustain the reputation of being 'dancing men.' We used to relate to each other over our celibate pipes wonderful stories of narrow escapes from guileful women every season; but if these were all as dependent upon the narrator's fancy for their important details as *my* contributions to the conversation, the escapes were somewhat more than hair's-breadth. Budell was especially a favourite in society; he was one of those rare phenomena, young barristers with some practice, and he had besides a very comfortable allowance from his father. Like the rest of the club, I had at first taken as a joke his assertion that he was afraid of ladies; but I gradually came to see that there was some truth in it. So long as Budell was in a large company—in a ball-room or any place like that—he was quite at his ease, and as bold as a lion; but if by any chance he happened to fall a temporary captive to a solitary damsel's bow and spear, he was almost overwhelmed with nervousness,

and his usual powers of conversation completely deserted him. I once met him at the Royal Academy, escorting a very pretty young lady, and looking as uneasy as if he had had a worse conscience than King Herod; and I have seen him tremble at a mere passing mention of the conservatory by his partner at a dance. However, in the Square Club he was our most enthusiastic member; and horror and indignation filled our souls when we realised the direful fact that Budell was in love, and doing his best to be married.

Had we been women we might probably have seen the symptoms of the advancing malady; but we were only obtuse and short-sighted men. Now as I look back over these months I recall incidents that might have been warnings. The gradual decrease of Budell's hilarity at the club, and the gradual increase of his excursions into society, could hardly indeed have been portents, for Budell always did go more into society than the rest of us. The first allusion that he made to me about the lady who was afterwards to play Beatrice to his Benedick was at a concert—or rather in the cloak-room, after a concert. 'That's what I call a pretty girl,' he whispered to me; 'there, that dark-eyed girl over there in the warm, fleecy, brown shawl—none of your flimsy white opera-cloaks.' The girl was pretty, in a fresh and piquant sort of way; and even a sworn bachelor might have been excused for being pleased at receiving such a frank smile as she greeted Budell with. Again, not many days after, he remarked to me, *à propos des bottes*—'Met rather an interesting girl last night; quite agrees with me on the subject of names.' I may be excused for neglecting this hint; Budell I think would have found a mollusc 'interesting' if it had only agreed with him that there was nothing more objectionable than to have one's name murdered. He was nervously anxious that his name should be pronounced with the accent on the second syllable; and I afterwards found that he had been introduced (for the second time) to this 'interesting girl' as 'Boodle.' 'Just as though I rhymed to noodle'—as he indignantly expressed it. But the most important hint was given the night after Mrs. Burton's ball, at which we had all been present. We were lounging in Budell's rooms, and Smithers was giving us a highly coloured and graphic illustration of the frivolity that passes for conversation between young men and maidens. 'That's all nonsense,' broke in Budell; 'it's your own fault, at any rate. Why, last night I had quite a serious and interesting conversation about woman's education with a "maiden." I even quoted Scripture to her.'

'Bet you a hat you misquoted,' said the irreverent Smithers, who thought every one was as ignorant as himself.

'No; I'm not joking; it's a fact, and I got an idea or two, let me tell you.' Had he only told us that he had ventured into the conservatory in order to carry on his conversation without interruption, I am convinced that I at least should have surmised that the acquisition of an idea or two was not the only result. However, I was not long in my state of ignorance. One day, a month or so after, Budell hunted me up to confide to me that the bachelors' club was all bosh; he was over head and ears in love, and did I think he ought to tell the other men? Then there followed a shower of apologetics, in which 'soft brown eyes' and goodness knows what other personal attractions were prominent. When I recovered breath, I assured him that I thought it quite incumbent upon him to inform the club. I was rigid and cold with him, for I felt indignant; it was almost an insult to select me as his confidant, as though my celibate principles were less fixed than Marby's or Smithers'.

His announcement that evening was received in solemn silence by the Square Club; even Smithers had at first nothing to say. At last Marby asked, 'Is it permitted to inquire the lady's name, and when the marriage is to take place?' Budell looked uncomfortable. 'Well, the fact is,' he said, 'I thought I ought to tell the club at once; but I really haven't—that is, I don't quite know how to set about asking the lady.'

Budell looked so comically distressed as he made this confession that the club hailed it with a shout of laughter. The notion of the bold and confident Budell finding himself muzzled by the tender passion was too suggestive for our risibility. Budell was seriously annoyed. 'I don't think,' he said, 'that my courtesy to the club has been met with courtesy.' He glared at me as if I specially had been guilty of revealing his confidence. We apologised humbly, and at last pacified him. He really was puzzled as to how to accomplish his proposal. Marby suggested the old-fashioned plan of plumping down on his knees, like a swain in a valentine; but Budell paled visibly. It was such a cold-blooded way, he objected; yet it appeared he had almost adopted it on two occasions. The first time a little brute of a brother had inopportunely appeared—'I never knew a nice girl that *hadn't* a little brute of a brother,' exclaimed Budell, hastily generalising; and on the second occasion he had even got the length of informing the object of his affections (to adopt a phrase that used to madden Budell) that he had something to tell her, when her mother entered, and he had hastily to devise some idiotic fact about a flower-show. It was quite evident that his nerve was not equal to a third attempt. I suggested that he should write; but it,

seemed that the young lady, in talking about a certain novel, had laughed the hero to scorn for resorting to so cowardly a plan as writing his proposal.

'Can't you save her life in some thrilling manner, and then cast yourself at her feet?' asked the romantic Marby.

'Or can't you get overtaken in a shower, and then you could neatly ask her to share your lot as well as your umbrella?' suggested Smithers.

Budell smiled faintly. 'It's all very well for you fellows to make fun of it when you haven't to do it yourselves; but all the same it's a ticklish thing to do well. I wish to do it in a neat and direct manner, without any humbug.'

'It's my opinion,' said Smithers, 'that you'll end by "popping the question" in some altogether extraordinary and absurd manner.'

'Very well, sir,' said Budell with dignity, 'we shall see.'

But when we left him, the idea of the irrepressible Budell being tongue-tied before a dainty little damsel, who couldn't even sit on a jury, came upon us again with redoubled force, and we awoke the echoes of the silent street with renewed shouts of laughter.

Poor Budell could find no opportunity of settling his fate. He revolved drearily round my rooms, where he materially interfered with my work by constantly putting skilfully elaborated questions to me, devised—to extract my opinion as to his lady-love, without revealing her name. I rose and fell in his estimation as my answers were what he desired or not; and I committed myself to an immense number of definite opinions as to the preference between blondes and brunettes, large mouths and small ears, &c. &c. 'Whether do you prefer Greek or Saxon names for ladies?' he once asked me. I answered at random that I liked them both equally. 'No, but really,' he persisted, 'I mean modern names derived from those languages.' 'Well,' I replied at a venture, 'I like Saxon names.' 'Do you?' he exclaimed; 'why, so do I. For example, I don't think you could find a prettier name than Edith anywhere.' 'Oho!' I cried, 'her name is Edith, is it?' Budell blushed, but couldn't deny it; and I dare say he would have revealed her surname also had I pressed him.

August brought me an invitation from Will Carlyon to spend a fortnight at his father's place in Scotland, and have a shot at the grouse. 'I've asked Marby, Smithers, and Budell,' he wrote, 'and I expect them all. I know you four have frightful chains-and-slavery notions about matrimony; but there are lots of nice girls staying here with Fanny, and if you don't all go home with the



full intention of forthwith becoming Benedicts I shall be surprised. Anyhow, we have plenty of birds.'

When I arrived I found the house full of pleasant men and agreeable girls; while the grouse gave very fair sport. The club was there in full force. Budell was in tolerable spirits, and came out in grand style as master of the ceremonies, and as the originator of all sorts of amusements. He was too busy to inflict any more confidences, but I had no reason to suppose that he had yet accomplished his proposal.

One afternoon a heavy rain-storm had driven the sportsmen in sooner than usual; I was examining my breechloader in the gun-room when Smithers mysteriously requested me to come to the smoking-room at once. There I found Budell and Marby. Smithers had convened the club, and we had the room to ourselves. He briefly explained his object. 'I have an announcement to make,' he said, 'similar to one made by Budell not long since. I'm going to follow his example, and I hereby invite you all to the wedding. Like Budell, I haven't yet put the final question, but I am not afraid of the answer. I have no objection to tell you that the young lady is at present in this house, and that her name is Miss Maxwell.'

'Good heavens!' ejaculated Budell.

'Well,' said Marby, 'I may as well take this opportunity of informing the club that I too am going to follow suit. Only I've taken the precaution to speak to the young lady first, and Fanny Carlyon is shortly going to become Mrs. Marby.'

I was thunderstruck. 'In that case,' I said with dignity, as I strode from the room, 'I am now the only member of the Square Club.'

Just as I was tying my necktie a few minutes before dinner, and reflecting that, though nervousness, want of leisure, and even blighted affections might be got over, I at least had a reason that would preserve me from matrimony, Budell hurried into my room.

'Look here,' he said, 'I'm in the deuce of a box! Smithers is going to propose to Miss Maxwell; and hang it, that's Edith!'

'What! you're both in love with Miss Maxwell?'

'Yes, and that forward beast, Smithers, will be sure to propose right off; and I've never had a good opportunity.'

'My dear Budell, you must *make* your opportunity. Do it to-night.'

'To-night? Why, it's dinner-time already! and after dinner we're to have those blessed *tableaux vivants*; and goodness knows what Smithers will do while I'm looking after the wretched affairs.

And then to-morrow, I've promised Carlyon to start for the east moor at nine o'clock.'

I endeavoured to comfort him by suggesting that possibly Miss Maxwell might refuse Smithers; but Budell shuddered at the possibility of being forestalled. He was palpably upset, and he looked nervous and anxious all dinner-time. The company generally attributed it to theatrical responsibility, but they were wrong; Budell was too old a hand to be anxious about anything so simple as *tableaux vivants*. Smithers, on the other hand, had secured a seat beside Miss Maxwell, and seemed to be making himself vastly agreeable.

The *tableaux* began immediately after dinner, and they were a great success. Budell had skilfully arranged them, without attempting to make them into a series; and music, supposed to be appropriate or to have some reference to each *tableau*, was played while the curtain was up. Curiously enough, in the second last *tableau*, Miss Maxwell, Smithers, and Budell were to appear by themselves; and still more curiously the subject of it was 'The Rivals.' Where Budell had got it I don't know; probably in his inner consciousness. It was supposed to be a woodland scene in the paint-and-powder days. A young lady was discovered seated on a bank, with a lover kneeling at her feet, and holding one of her hands. At a little distance, and unseen by either of the lovers, was a rival glaring from among the trees at the unsuspecting pair. The *tableau* was very effective. Miss Maxwell looked very charming in her costume, and Smithers glared splendidly. Budell's face it was impossible to see, for his back was turned to the audience. Up till now the performers had all managed to remain as rigid as statues; but in this *tableau* Miss Maxwell, who had already appeared several times, seemed to lose her nerve. The curtain had not been up a minute when she started, looked down at Budell, and at last, flushing crimson, fairly ran off the stage. However, the last *tableau* went off without a hitch, and the slight mistake did not affect the general verdict. An adjournment was made to have a dance in the hall, and I was standing idly looking on when Budell, once more in his usual garb, rushed up to me in a fever of excitement.

'By George, sir,' he whispered, 'congratulate me! I've done it; it's all right.'

And he dragged me along with him from the hall into the empty library.

'What on earth do you mean, man?' I exclaimed. 'What have you done?'

'I've proposed, sir; and I've been accepted.'

I cordially congratulated him; and then I inquired, 'How did you manage it—when did you find the time—and where the courage?'

'I'll tell you. I did it in that *tableau*. Under cover of the music I told Edith that in all sober earnestness I was at her feet, not in jest alone; and I asked her to be my wife. That's why she ran away.'

'No wonder!' I interjected.

'Wasn't it splendid doing it under Smithers' very eyes? And then of course I saw Edith afterwards in the little drawing-room; and she'll be here directly, whenever she has changed her costume.'

'Well, I'm glad you've settled it; and I think Smithers was right when he said you would end by proposing in some extraordinary way. And it seems to me that it was decidedly embarrassing for Miss Maxwell.'

Smithers married Edith Maxwell's sister eighteen months after the *tableau*.

FINDLAY MUIRHEAD.

## Heart and Science :

A STORY OF THE PRESENT TIME.

BY WILKIE COLLINS.

(The right of translation is reserved.)

### CHAPTER XXXIX.

MRS. GALLILEE's maid looked at her watch, when the carriage left Mr. Mool's house. 'We shall be nearly an hour late, before we get home,' she said.

'It's my fault, Jane. Tell your mistress the truth, if she questions you. I shall not think the worse of you for obeying your orders.'

'I'd rather lose my place, Miss, than get you into trouble.'

The woman spoke truly. Carmina's sweet temper had made her position not only endurable, but delightful. She had been treated like a companion and a friend. As they now drove briskly on the road home, she looked at her 'young lady' with an anxious interest which proved the sincerity of the feeling that she had just expressed.

Instead of talking pleasantly as usual, Carmina was silent and sad. Had this change in her spirits been caused by the visit to Mr. Mool? It was even so. The lawyer had innocently decided her on taking the desperate course which Miss Minerva had proposed.

If Mrs. Gallilee's assertion of her absolute right of authority, as guardian, had been declared by Mr. Mool to be incorrect, Carmina was prepared to propose a compromise of her own devising. She would have engaged to remain at her aunt's disposal until Ovid returned, on condition of being allowed, when Teresa arrived in London, to live in retirement with her old nurse. This change of abode would prevent any collision between Mrs. Gallilee and Teresa, and would make Carmina's life as peaceful, and even as happy, as she could wish.

But now that the lawyer had confirmed her aunt's statement of the position in which they stood towards one another, all hope of carrying out such an arrangement as this—to any person acquainted with Mrs. Gallilee's temper—was at an end. Instant flight to Ovid's love and protection was the one choice left—unless Car-

mina could resign herself to a life of merciless persecution and perpetual suspense.

The arrangements for the flight were already complete.

That momentary view of Mrs. Gallilee's face reflected in the glass had confirmed Miss Minerva's resolution to interfere. Closeted with Carmina on the Sunday morning, she had proposed a scheme of escape which would even set Mrs. Gallilee's vigilance and cunning at defiance. No pecuniary obstacle stood in the way. The first quarterly payment of Carmina's allowance of five hundred a year had been already made, by Mr. Mool's advice. Enough was left—even without the assistance which the nurse's resources would render—to purchase the necessary outfit, and to take the two women to Quebec. On the day after Teresa's arrival (at an hour of the morning while the servants were still in bed) Carmina and her companion could escape from the house on foot—and not leave a trace behind them.

Meanwhile, Fortune befriended Mrs. Gallilee's maid. No questions were put to her; no notice even was taken of the late return.

Five minutes before the carriage drew up at the house, a learned female friend from the country called, by appointment, on Mrs. Gallilee. On the coming Tuesday afternoon, an event of the deepest scientific interest was to take place. A new Professor had undertaken to deliver himself, by means of a lecture, of subversive opinions on 'Matter.' A general discussion was to follow; and in that discussion (upon certain conditions) Mrs. Gallilee herself proposed to take part.

'If the Professor attempts to account for the mutual action of separate atoms,' she said, 'I defy him to do it, without assuming the existence of a continuous material medium in space. And this point of view being accepted—follow me here!—what is the result? In plain words,' cried Mrs. Gallilee, rising excitedly to her feet, 'we dispense with the idea of atoms!'

The friend looked infinitely relieved by the prospect of dispensing with atoms.

'Now observe!' Mrs. Gallilee proceeded. 'In connection with this part of the subject, I shall wait to see if the Professor adopts Thomson's theory. You are acquainted with Thomson's theory? No? Let me put it briefly. Mere heterogeneity, together with gravitation, is sufficient to explain all the apparently discordant laws of molecular action. You understand? Very well. If the Professor passes over Thomson, *then*, I rise in the body of the Hall, and take my stand on these grounds.'

While Mrs. Gallilee's grounds were being laid out for the

benefit of her friend, the coachman took the carriage back to the stables ; the maid went downstairs to tea ; and Carmina joined Miss Minerva in the schoolroom—all three being protected from discovery by Mrs. Gallilee's rehearsal of her performance in the Comedy of Atoms.

The Monday morning brought with it news from Rome—serious news which confirmed Miss Minerva's misgivings.

Carmina received a letter, bearing the Italian postmark, but not addressed to her in Teresa's handwriting. She looked to the signature at the end. Her correspondent was the old priest—Father Patrizio. He wrote in these words :—

‘My dear child,—Our good Teresa leaves us to-day, on her journey to London. She has impatiently submitted to the legal ceremonies, rendered necessary by her husband having died without making a will. He hardly left anything in the way of money, after payment of his burial expenses, and his few little debts. What is of far greater importance—he lived, and died, a good Christian. I was with him in his last moments. Offer your prayers, my dear, for the repose of his soul.

‘Teresa left me, declaring her purpose of travelling night and day, so as to reach you the sooner. Strong as this good creature is, I believe she will be obliged to rest on the road for a night at least. Calculating on this, I assume that my letter will get to you first. I have something to say about your old nurse which it is well that you should know.

‘Do not for a moment suppose that I blame you for having told Teresa of the unfriendly reception which you appear to have met with from your aunt and guardian. Whom should you confide in—if not in the excellent woman who has filled the place of a mother to you? Besides, from your earliest years, have I not always instilled into you the reverence of truth? You have told the truth in your letters. My child, I commend you, and feel for you.

‘But the impression produced on Teresa is not what you or I could wish. It is one of her merits, that she loves you with the truest devotion ; it is one of her defects, that she is fierce and obstinate in resentment. Your aunt has become an object of absolute hatred to her. I have combated—successfully, as I hope and believe—this unchristian state of feeling.

‘She is now beyond the reach of my influence. My purpose in writing is to beg you to continue the good work that I have begun. Compose this impetuous nature ; restrain this fiery spirit.

Your gentle influence, Carmina, has a power of its own over those who love you—and who loves you like Teresa?—of which perhaps you are not yourself aware. Use your power discreetly; and, with the blessing of God and His Saints, I have no fear of the result.

‘Write to me, my child, when Teresa arrives—and let me hear that you are happier, and better in health. Tell me also, whether there is any speedy prospect of your marriage. If I may presume to judge from the little I know, your dearest earthly interests depend on the removal of obstacles to this salutary change in your life. I send you my good wishes, and my blessing. If a poor old priest like me can be of any service, do not forget

‘FATHER PATRIZIO.’

Any lingering hesitation that Carmina might still have felt was at an end when she read this letter. Good Father Patrizio, like good Mr. Mool, had innocently urged her to set her guardian’s authority at defiance.

## CHAPTER XL.

WHEN the morning lessons were over, Carmina showed the priest’s letter to Miss Minerva. The governess read it, and handed it back in silence.

‘Have you nothing to say?’ Carmina asked.

‘Nothing.’ You know my opinion already. That letter says what I have said—with greater authority.’

‘It has determined me to follow your advice, Frances.’

‘Then it has done well.’

‘And you see,’ Carmina continued, ‘that Father Patrizio speaks of obstacles in the way of my marriage. Teresa has evidently shown him my letters. Do you think he fears, as I do, that my aunt may find some means of separating us, even when Ovid comes back?’

‘Very likely.’

She spoke in faint, weary tones—listlessly leaning back in her chair. Carmina asked if she had passed another sleepless night.

‘Yes,’ she said, ‘another bad night, and the usual martyrdom in teaching the children. I don’t know which disgusts me most—Zoe’s impudent stupidity, or Maria’s unendurable humbug.’

She had never yet spoken of Maria in this way. Even her voice seemed to be changed. Instead of betraying the usual angry abruptness, her tones coldly indicated impenetrable contempt. In the silence that ensued, she looked up, and saw Carmina’s eyes resting on her anxiously and kindly.

'Any other human being but you,' she said, 'would find me disagreeable and rude—and would be quite right, too. I haven't asked after your health. You look paler than usual. Have *you*, too, had a bad night?'

'I fell asleep towards the morning. And—oh, I had such a delightful dream! I could almost wish that I had never awakened from it.'

'Whom did you dream of?' She put the question mechanically—frowning, as if at some repellent thought suggested to her by what she had just heard.

'I dreamed of my mother,' Carmina answered.

Miss Minerva raised herself at once in the chair. Whatever that passing impression might have been, she was free from it now. There was some little life again in her eyes; some little spirit in her voice. 'Take me out of myself,' she said; 'tell me your dream.'

'It is nothing very remarkable, Frances. We all of us sometimes see our dear lost ones in sleep. I saw my mother again, as I used to see her in the nursery at bedtime—tall and beautiful, with her long dark hair falling over her white dressing-gown to the waist. She stooped over me, and kissed me; and she looked surprised. She said, "My little angel, why are you here in a strange house? I have come to take you back to your own cot, by my bedside." I wasn't surprised or frightened; I put my arms round her neck; and we floated away together through the cool starry night; and we were at home again. I saw my cot, with its pretty white curtains and pink ribbons. I heard my mother tell me an English fairy story, out of a book which my father had given to her—and her kind voice grew fainter and fainter, while I grew more and more sleepy—and it ended softly, just as it used to end in the happy old days. And I woke, crying. Do *you* ever dream of your mother now?'

'I? God forbid!'

'Oh, Frances, what a dreadful thing to say!'

'Is it? It was the thought in me, when you spoke. And with good reason, too. I was the last of a large family—the ugly one; the ill-tempered one; the incumbrance that made it harder than ever to find money enough to pay the household expenses. My father swore at my mother for *being* my mother. She reviled him just as bitterly in return; and vented the rest of her ill-temper on my wretched little body, with no sparing hand. Bedtime was her time for beating me. Talk of your mother—not of mine! You were very young, were you not, when she died?'



'Too young to feel my misfortune—but old enough to remember the sweetest woman that ever lived. Let me show you my father's portrait of her again. Doesn't that face tell you what an angel she was? There was some charm in her that all children felt. I can just remember some of my playfellows who used to come to our garden. Other good mothers were with us—but the children all crowded round *my* mother. They would have her in all their games; they fought for places on her lap when she told them stories; some of them cried, and some of them screamed, when it was time to take them away from her. Oh, why do we live! why do we die! I have bitter thoughts sometimes, Frances, like you. I have read in poetry that death is a fearful thing. To me, death is a cruel thing,—and it has never seemed so cruel as in these later days, since I have known Ovid. If my mother had but lived till now, what happiness would have been added to my life! How Ovid would have loved her—how she would have loved Ovid!'

Miss Minerva listened in silence. It was the silence of true interest and sympathy, while Carmina was speaking of her mother. When her lover's name became mingled with the remembrances of her childhood—the change came. Once more, the tell-tale lines began to harden in the governess's face. She lay back again in her chair. Her fingers irritably platted and unplatted the edge of her black apron.

Carmina was too deeply absorbed in her thoughts, too eagerly bent on giving them expression, to notice these warning signs.

'I have all my mother's letters to my father,' she went on, 'when he was away from her on his sketching excursions. You have still a little time to spare—I should so like to read some of them to you. I was reading one, last night—which perhaps accounts for my dream! It is on a subject that interests everybody. In my father's absence, a very dear friend of his met with a misfortune; and my mother had to prepare his wife to hear the bad news—oh, that reminds me! There is something I want to say to you first.'

'About yourself?' Miss Minerva asked.

'About Ovid. I want your advice.'

Miss Minerva was silent. Carmina went on. 'It's about writing to Ovid,' she explained.

'Write, of course!'

The reply was suddenly and sharply given. 'Surely, I have not offended you?' Carmina said.

'Nonsense! Let me hear your mother's letter.'

'Yes—but I want you to hear the circumstances first.'

‘You have mentioned them already.’

‘No! no! I mean the circumstances, in my case.’ She drew her chair closer to Miss Minerva. ‘I want to whisper—for fear of somebody passing on the stairs. The more I think of it, the more I feel that I ought to prepare Ovid for seeing me, before I make my escape. You said when we talked of it——’

‘Never mind what I said.’

‘Oh, but I do mind! You said I could go to Ovid’s bankers at Quebec, and then write when I knew where he was. I have been thinking over it since—and I see a serious risk. He might return from his inland journey, on the very day that I get there: he might even meet me in the street. In his delicate health—I daren’t think of what the consequences of such a surprise might be! And then there is the dreadful necessity of telling him that his mother has driven me into taking this desperate step. In my place, wouldn’t you feel that you could do it more delicately in writing?’

‘Yes!’

‘I might write to-morrow, for instance. To-morrow is one of the American mail days. My letter would get to Canada (remembering the roundabout way by which Teresa and I are to travel, for fear of discovery) days and days before we could arrive. I should shut myself up in an hotel at Quebec; and Teresa could go every day to the bank to hear if Ovid was likely to send for his letters, or likely to call soon, and ask for them. Then he would be prepared. Then, when we meet——!’

The governess left her chair, and pointed to the clock.

Carmina looked at her—and rose in alarm. ‘Are you in pain?’ she asked.

‘Yes—neuralgia, I think. I have the remedy in my room. Don’t keep me, my dear. Mrs. Gallilee musn’t find me here again.’

The paroxysm of pain which Carmina had noticed passed over her face once more. She subdued it, and left the room. The pain mastered her again; a low cry broke from her when she closed the door. Carmina ran out: ‘Frances! what is it?’ Frances looked over her shoulder, while she slowly ascended the stairs. ‘Never mind!’ she said gently. ‘Never mind!’

Carmina advanced a step to follow her, and drew back.

Was that expression of suffering really caused by pain of the body? or was it attributable to anything that she had rashly said? She tried to recall what had passed between Frances and herself. The effort wearied her. Her thoughts turned self-reproachfully to Ovid. If he had been speaking to a friend whose secret sorrow

was known to him, would he have mentioned the name of the woman whom they both loved? She looked at his portrait, and reviled herself as a selfish, insensible wretch. 'Will Ovid improve me?' she wondered. 'Shall I be a little worthier of him, when I am his wife?'

Luncheon time came; and Mrs. Gallilee sent word that they were not to wait for her.

'She's studying,' said Mr. Gallilee, with awe-struck looks. 'She's going to make a speech at the Discussion to-morrow. The man who gives the lecture is the man she's going to pitch into. I don't know him; but—how do you feel about it yourself, Carmina?—I wouldn't stand in his shoes for any sum of money you could offer me. Poor devil! I beg your pardon, my dear; let me give you a wing of the fowl. Boiled fowl—eh? and tongue—ha? Do you know the story of the foreigner? He dined out fifteen times with his English friends. And there was boiled fowl and tongue at every dinner. The fifteenth time, the foreigner couldn't stand it any longer. He slapped his forehead, and he said, "Ah, merciful Heaven, cock and bacon again!" You won't mention it, will you?—and perhaps you think as I do?—I'm sick of cock and bacon, myself.'

Mr. Null's medical orders still prescribed fresh air. The carriage came to the door at the regular hour; and Mr. Gallilee, with equal regularity, withdrew to his club.

Carmina was too uneasy to leave the house, without seeing Miss Minerva first. She went up to the schoolroom.

There was no sound of voices, when she opened the door. Miss Minerva was writing, and silence had been proclaimed. The girls were ready dressed for their walk. Industrious Maria had her book. Idle Zo, perched on a high chair, sat kicking her legs. 'If you say a word,' she whispered, as Carmina passed her, 'you'll be called an Imp, and stuck up on a chair. I shall go to the boy.'

'Are you better, Frances?'

'Much better, my dear.'

Her face denied it; the look of suffering was there still. She tore up the letter which she had been writing, and threw the fragments into the wastepaper basket.

'That's the second letter you've torn up,' Zo remarked.

'Say a word more—and you shall have bread and water for tea!' Miss Minerva was not free from irritation, although she might be free from pain. Even Zo noticed how angry the governess was.

'I wish you could drive with me in the carriage,' said Carmina. 'The air would do you so much good.'

‘Impossible! But you may soothe my irritable nerves in another way, if you like.’

‘How?’

‘Relieve me of these girls. Take them out with you. Do you mind?’

Zo instantly jumped off her chair; and even Maria looked up from her book.

‘I will take them with pleasure. Must we ask my aunt’s permission?’

‘We will dispense with your aunt’s permission. She is shut up in her study—and we are all forbidden to disturb her. I will take it on myself.’ She turned to the girls with another outbreak of irritability. ‘Be off!’

Maria rose with dignity, and made another successful exit. ‘I am sorry, dear Miss Minerva, if I have done anything to make you angry.’ She pointed the emphasis on ‘I,’ by a side-look at her sister. Zo bounced out of the room, and performed the Italian boy’s dance on the landing. ‘For shame!’ said Maria. Zo burst into singing. ‘Yah-yah-yah-bellah-vitah-yah! Jolly! jolly! jolly!—we are going out for a drive!’

Carmina waited, to say a friendly word, before she followed the girls.

‘You didn’t think me neglectful, Frances, when I let you go upstairs by yourself?’

Miss Minerva answered sadly and kindly. ‘The best thing you could do was to leave me by myself.’

Carmina’s mind was still not quite at ease. ‘Yes—but you were in pain,’ she said.

‘You curious child! I am not in pain now.’

‘Will you make me comfortable, Frances? Give me a kiss.’

‘Two, my dear—if you like.’

She kissed Carmina on one cheek and on the other. ‘Now, leave me to write,’ she said.

Carmina left her.

The drive ought to have been a pleasant one, with Zo in the carriage. To the maid, it was a time of the heartiest enjoyment. Maria herself condescended to smile, now and then. There was only one dull person in the carriage. ‘Miss Carmina was but poor company,’ the maid remarked when they got back.

Mrs. Gallilee herself received them in the hall.

‘You will never take the children out again, without my leave,’ she said to Carmina. ‘The person who is really responsible for what you have done will mislead you no more.’ With those words she entered the library and closed the door.

Maria and Zo, at the sight of their mother, had hurried upstairs. Carmina stood alone in the hall. Mrs. Gallilee had turned her cold. After a while, she followed the children as far as her own room. There, her resolution failed her. She called faintly upstairs—'Frances!' There was no answering voice. She went into her room. A small paper packet was on the table; sealed, and addressed to herself. She tore it open. A ring with a little ruby in it dropped out: she recognised the stone—it was Miss Minerva's ring.

Some blotted lines were traced on the paper, inside.

'I have tried to pour out my heart to you in writing—and I have torn up the letters. The fewest words are the best. Look back at my confession—and you will know why I have left you. You shall hear from me, when I am more worthy of you than I am now. In the meantime, wear my ring. It will tell you how mean I once was. F. M.'

Carmina looked at the ring. She remembered that Frances had tried to make her accept it as security, in return for the loan of twenty pounds.

She looked at the confession. Two passages in it were underlined: 'The wickedness in me, on which Mrs. Gallilee calculated, may be in me still.' And, again: 'Even now, when you have found me out, I love him. Don't trust me.'

Never had Carmina trusted her more faithfully than she trusted her at that bitter moment!

## CHAPTER XLI.

THE ordinary aspect of the schoolroom was seen no more.

Installed in a position of temporary authority, the parlour-maid sat silently at her needlework. Maria stood by the window, in the new character of an idle girl—with her handkerchief in her hand, and her everlasting book dropped unnoticed on the floor. Zo lay flat on her back, on the hearth-rug, hugging the dog in her arms. At intervals, she rolled herself over slowly from side to side, and stared at the ceiling with wondering eyes. Miss Minerva's departure had struck the parlour-maid dumb, and had petrified the pupils.

Maria broke the silence at last. 'I wonder where Carmina is?' she said.

'In her room, most likely,' the parlour-maid suggested.

'Had I better go and see after her?'

The cautious parlour-maid declined to offer advice. Maria's well-balanced mind was so completely unhinged that she looked with languid curiosity at her sister. Zo was still rolling slowly

from one side to the other; trying perhaps instinctively to set the inert weight of thought in her moving in that manner. The dog on her breast, lulled by the regular motion, slept profoundly: not even troubled by a dream of fleas!

While Maria was still considering what it might be best to do, Carmina entered the room. She looked, as the servant afterwards described it, 'like a person who had lost her way.' Maria exhibited the feeling of the schoolroom by raising her handkerchief in solemn silence to her eyes. Without taking notice of this demonstration, Carmina approached the parlour-maid, and said, 'Did you see Miss Minerva before she went away?'

'I took her message, Miss.'

'What message?'

'The message, saying she wished to see my mistress for a few minutes.'

'Well?'

'Well, miss, I was told to show the governess into the library. She went down with her bonnet on, ready dressed to go out. Before she had been five minutes with my mistress she came out again, and rang the hall-bell, and spoke to Joseph. "My boxes are packed and directed," she says; "I will send for them in an hour's time. Good day, Joseph." And she stepped into the street, as quietly as if she was going out shopping round the corner.'

'Have the boxes been sent for?'

'Yes, miss.'

Carmina lifted her head, and spoke in steadier tones.

'Where have they been taken to?'

'To the flower-shop at the back—to be kept till called for.'

'No other address?'

'None.'

The last faint hope of tracing Frances was at an end. Carmina turned wearily to leave the room. Zo called to her from the hearthrug. Always kind to the child, she retraced her steps. 'What is it?' she asked.

Zo got on her legs before she spoke, like a member of parliament. 'I've been thinking about that governess,' she announced. 'Didn't I once tell you I was going to run away? And wasn't it because of Her? Hush! Here's the part of it I can't make out—She's run away from Me. I don't bear malice; I'm only glad in myself. No more dirty nails. No more bread and water for tea. That's all. Good morning.' Zo laid herself down again on the rug; and the dog laid himself down again on Zo.

Carmina returned to her room—to reflect on what she had heard from the parlour-maid.

It was now plain that Mrs. Gallilee had not been allowed the opportunity of dismissing her governess at a moment's notice: Miss Minerva's sudden departure was unquestionably due to Miss Minerva herself. Thus far, Carmina was able to think clearly—and no farther. The confused sense of helpless distress which she had felt, after reading the few farewell words that Frances had addressed to her, still oppressed her mind. There were moments when she vaguely understood, and bitterly lamented, the motives which had animated her unhappy friend. Other moments followed, when she impulsively resented the act which had thrown her on her own resources, at the very time when she had most need of the encouragement that could be afforded by the sympathy of a firmer nature than her own. She began to doubt the steadiness of her resolution—without Frances to take leave of her, on the morning of the escape. For the first time, she was now tortured by distrust of Ovid's reception of her; by dread of his possible disapproval of her boldness; by morbid suspicion even of his taking his mother's part. Bewildered and reckless, she threw herself on the sofa—her heart embittered against Frances—indifferent whether she lived or died.

At dinner-time she sent a message, begging to be excused from appearing at the table. Mrs. Gallilee at once presented herself, harder and colder than ever, to inspect the invalid. Perceiving no immediate necessity for summoning Mr. Null, she said, 'Ring, if you want anything,' and left the room.

Mr. Gallilee followed, after an interval, with a little surreptitious offering of wine (hidden under his coat); and with a selection of tarts crammed into his pocket. 'Smuggled goods, my dear,' he whispered, 'picked up when nobody happened to be looking my way. When we are miserable, Carmina, it's a sign from kind Providence that we are intended to eat and drink. The sherry's old, and the pastry melts in your mouth. Shall I stay with you? You would rather not? Just my feeling! Remarkable similarity in our opinions—don't you think so yourself? I'm sorry for poor Miss Minerva. Suppose you go to bed?'

Carmina was in no mood to profit by this excellent advice. She was walking restlessly up and down her room, when the time came for shutting up the house. With the sound of closing locks and bolts, there was suddenly mingled a sharp ring at the bell; followed by another unexpected event. Mr. Gallilee paid her a second visit—in a state of transformation. His fat face was flushed: he positively looked as if he was capable of feeling strong emotion, unconnected with champagne and the club! He pre-

sented a telegram to Carmina—and, when he spoke, there were thrills of agitation in the tones of his piping voice.

‘My dear, something very unpleasant has happened. I met Joseph taking this to my wife. Highly improper, in my opinion,—what do you say yourself?—to take it to Mrs. Gallilee, when it’s addressed to you. It was no mistake; he was so impudent as to say he had his orders. I have reproved Joseph.’ Mr. Gallilee looked astonished at himself, when he made this latter statement—then relapsed into his customary sweetness of temper. ‘No bad news?’ he asked anxiously, when Carmina opened the telegram.

‘Good news! the best of good news!’ she answered impetuously.

Mr. Gallilee looked as happy as if the welcome telegram had been addressed to himself. On his way out of the room, he underwent another relapse. The footman’s audacious breach of trust began to trouble him again. He said—he actually said, without appealing to anybody—‘Damn Joseph!’

The telegram was from Teresa. It had been despatched from Paris that evening; and the message was thus expressed: ‘Too tired to get on to England by to-night’s mail. Shall leave by the early train to-morrow morning, and be with you by six o’clock.’

Carmina’s mind was exactly in the state to feel unmingled relief at the prospect of seeing the dear old friend of her happiest days. Her thoughts never adverted to Mrs. Gallilee’s attempt at surprising some suspected communication between Miss Minerva and herself—so plainly revealed by the order to the footman. For that night, it was enough to know that she was not quite friendless yet. No fear of what might follow Teresa’s return troubled her, when she laid her head on the pillow. Her courage had revived: she felt equal again (with the dear old nurse’s help) to confront the risk of the meditated flight. In her steadier flow of spirits, she could now see all that was worthiest of sympathy and admiration, all that claimed loving submission and allowance from herself, in the sacrifice to which Frances had submitted. How bravely the poor governess had controlled the jealous misery that tortured her! How nobly she had renounced Carmina’s friendship, for Carmina’s sake!

The next day—the important Tuesday of the lecture on Matter; the delightful Tuesday of Teresa’s arrival—brought with it special demands on Carmina’s pen.

Her first letter was addressed to Frances. It was frankly and earnestly written; entreating Miss Minerva to appoint a place at which they might meet, and assuring her, in the most affectionate terms, that she was still loved, trusted, and admired by her faith-



ful friend. The parlour-maid took the letter immediately to the flower shop, and placed it herself under the cord of one of the boxes—still waiting to be claimed.

The second letter filled many pages, and occupied the remainder of the morning.

With the utmost delicacy, but with perfect truthfulness at the same time, Carmina revealed to her betrothed husband the serious reasons which had forced her to withdraw herself from his mother's care. Bound to speak at last in her own defence, she felt that concealments and compromises would be alike unworthy of Ovid and of herself. What she had already written to Teresa, she now wrote again—with but one modification. She expressed herself forbearingly towards Ovid's mother. The closing words of the letter were worthy of Carmina's gentle, just, and generous nature.

'You will perhaps say, Why do I only hear now of all that you have suffered? My love, I have longed to tell you of it! I have even taken up my pen to begin. But I thought of *you*, and put it down again. How selfish, how cruel, to hinder your recovery by causing you sorrow and suspense—to bring you back perhaps to England before your health was restored! I don't regret the effort that it has cost me to keep silence. My only sorrow in writing to you is, that I must speak of your mother in terms which may lower her in her son's estimation.'

The servant brought the luncheon up to Carmina's room. The mistress was still at her studies; the master had gone to his club. As for the girls, their only teacher for the present was the teacher of music. When the ordeal of the lecture and the discussion had been passed, Mrs. Gallilee threatened to take Miss Minerva's place herself, until a new governess could be found. For once, Maria and Zo showed a sisterly similarity in their feelings. It was hard to say which of the two looked forward to her learned mother's instruction with the greatest terror.

Carmina heard the pupils at the piano, while she was eating her luncheon. The profanation of music ceased, when she went into the bedroom to get ready for her daily drive. She took her letter, duly closed and stamped, downstairs with her—to be sent to the post with the other letters of the day, collected in the basket. In the weakened state of her nerves, the effort that she had made in writing to Ovid had shaken her. Her heart beat uneasily; her knees trembled, as she descended the stairs.

Arrived in sight of the hall, she discovered a man walking slowly to and fro. He turned towards her as she advanced, and disclosed the detestable face of Mr. Le Frank.

The music-master's last reserves of patience had come to an

end. Watch for them as he might, no opportunities had presented themselves of renewing his investigation in Carmina's room. In the interval that had passed, his hungry suspicion of her had been left to feed on itself. The motives for that incomprehensible attempt to make a friend of him, so strangely accompanied by a sinister invitation to shake hands, remained hidden in as thick a darkness as ever. Victim of adverse circumstances, Mr. Le Frank had determined (with the greatest reluctance) to take the straightforward course. Instead of secretly getting his information from Carmina's journals and letters, he was now reduced to openly applying for enlightenment to Carmina herself.

Occupying, for the time being, the position of an honourable man, he presented himself at cruel disadvantage. He was not master of his own glorious voice; he was without the self-possession indispensable to the perfect performance of his magnificent bow. 'I have waited to have a word with you,' he began abruptly, 'before you go out for your drive.'

Already unnerved, even before she had seen him—painfully conscious that she had committed a serious error, on the last occasion when they had met, in speaking at all—Carmina neither answered him nor looked at him. She bent her head confusedly, and advanced a little nearer to the house door.

He at once moved so as to place himself in her way.

'I must request you to call to mind what passed between us,' he resumed, 'when we met by accident some little time since.'

He had speculated on frightening her. His insolence stirred her spirit into asserting itself. 'Let me by, if you please,' she said; 'the carriage is waiting for me.'

'The carriage can wait a little longer,' he answered coarsely. 'On the occasion to which I have referred, you were so good as to make advances, to which I cannot consider myself as having any claim. Perhaps you will favour me by stating your motives?'

'I don't understand you, sir.'

'Oh yes—you do!'

She stepped back, and laid her hand on the bell which rang below stairs, in the pantry. 'Must I ring?' she said.

It was plain that she would do it, if he moved a step nearer to her. He drew aside—with a look which made her tremble. On passing the hall table, she placed her letter in the post-basket. His eye followed it, as it left her hand: he became suddenly penitent and polite. 'I am sorry if I have alarmed you,' he said, and opened the house door for her—without showing himself to the coachman and the maid outside.

The carriage having been driven away, he softly closed the

door again, and returned to the hall table. He looked into the post-basket.

Was there any danger of discovery by the servants? The footman was absent, attending his mistress on her way to the lecture. None of the female servants were on the stairs. He took up Carmina's letter and looked at the address: *To Doctor Ovid Vere.*

His eyes twinkled furtively; his excellent memory for injuries reminded him that Doctor Ovid Vere had endeavoured (without even caring to conceal it) to prevent Mrs. Gallilee from engaging him as her music-master. By subtle links of its own forging, his vindictive nature now connected his hatred of the person to whom the letter was addressed, with his interest in stealing the letter itself for the discovery of Carmina's secrets. The clock told him that there was plenty of time to open the envelope, and (if the contents proved to be of no importance to him) to close it again, and take it himself to the post. After a last look round, he withdrew undiscovered, with the letter in his pocket.

Returning to the house, the carriage was passed by a cab, with a man in it, driven at such a furious rate that there was a narrow escape of collision. The maid screamed; Carmina turned pale; the coachman wondered why the man in the cab was in such a hurry. The man was Mr. Mool's head clerk, on his way to Doctor Benjulia.

## CHAPTER XLII.

THE mind of the clerk's master had been troubled by serious doubts, after Carmina left his house on Sunday.

Her agitated manner, her strange questions, and her abrupt departure, all suggested to Mr. Mool's mind some rash project in contemplation—perhaps even the plan of an elopement. To most other men, the obvious course to take would have been to communicate with Mrs. Gallilee. But the lawyer preserved a vivid remembrance of the interview which had taken place at his office. The detestable pleasure which Mrs. Gallilee had betrayed in profaning the memory of Carmina's mother had so shocked and disgusted him that he recoiled from the idea of holding any further intercourse with her, no matter how pressing the emergency might be. It was possible, after what had passed, that Carmina might feel the propriety of making some explanation by letter. He decided to wait until the next morning, on the chance of hearing from her.

On the Monday, no letter arrived. Proceeding to the office,

Mr. Mool found, in his business correspondence, enough to occupy every moment of his time. He had purposed writing to Carmina, but the idea was now inevitably pressed out of his mind. It was only at the close of the day's work that he had leisure to think of a matter of greater importance—that is to say, of the necessity of discovering Benjulia's friend of other days, the Italian teacher Baccani. He left instructions with one of his clerks to make inquiries the next morning at the shops of foreign booksellers. There, and there only, the question might be answered, whether Baccani was still living, and living in London.

The inquiries proved successful. On Tuesday afternoon, Baccani's address was in Mr. Mool's hands.

Busy as he still was, the lawyer set aside his own affairs, in deference to the sacred duty of defending the memory of the dead, and to the pressing necessity of silencing Mrs. Gallilee's cruel and slanderous tongue. Arrived at Baccani's lodgings, he was informed that the language-master had gone to his dinner at a neighbouring restaurant. Mr. Mool waited at the lodgings, and sent a note to Baccani. In ten minutes more he found himself in the presence of an elderly man, of ascetic appearance, whose looks and tones showed him to be apt to take offence on small provocation, and more than half ready to suspect an eminent solicitor of being a spy.

But Mr. Mool's experience was equal to the call on it. Having clearly and fully explained the object that he had in view, he left the apology for his intrusion to be inferred, and concluded by an appeal—always, to their credit be it spoken, seriously received by foreigners—an appeal to the sympathy of an honourable man.

Silently forming his opinion of the lawyer, while he listened, Baccani expressed the conclusion at which he had arrived, in these terms:—

'My experience of mankind, sir, has been a bitterly bad one. You have improved my opinion of human nature since you entered this room. That is not a little thing to say, at my age and in my circumstances.'

He bowed gravely, and turned to his bed. From under it he pulled out a clumsy iron box. Having opened the rusty lock with some difficulty, he produced a ragged pocket-book, and picked out from it a paper which looked like an old letter.

'There,' he said, handing the paper to Mr. Mool, 'is the statement which vindicates this lady's reputation. Before you open the manuscript I must tell you how I came by it.'

He appeared to feel such embarrassment in approaching the subject that Mr. Mool interposed.

'I am already acquainted,' he said, 'with some of the circumstances to which you are about to allude. I happen to know of the wager in which the calumny originated, and of the manner in which that wager was decided. The events which followed are the only events that I need trouble you to describe.'

Baccani's grateful sense of relief avowed itself without reserve. 'I feel your kindness,' he said, 'as keenly as I feel my own disgraceful conduct, in permitting a woman's reputation to be made the subject of a wager. From whom did you obtain your information?'

'From the person who mentioned your name to me—Doctor Benjulia.'

Baccani lifted his hand with a gesture of angry protest.

'Don't speak of him again, sir, in my presence!' he burst out. 'That man has insulted me. When I took refuge from political persecution in this country, I sent him my prospectus. From my own humble position as a teacher of languages, I looked up without envy to his celebrity among doctors; I thought I might remind him, not unfavourably, of our early friendship—I, who had done him a hundred kindnesses in those past days. He has never taken the slightest notice of me; he has not even acknowledged the receipt of my prospectus. Despicable wretch! Let me hear no more of him.'

'Pray forgive me if I refer to him again—for the last time,' Mr. Mool pleaded. 'Did your acquaintance with him continue after the question of the wager had been settled?'

'No, sir!' Baccani answered sternly. 'When I was at leisure, a few days afterwards, to go to the club at which we were accustomed to meet, he had left Rome. From that time to this—I rejoice to say it—I have never set eyes on him.'

The obstacles which had prevented the refutation of the calumny from reaching Benjulia were now revealed. Mr. Mool had only to hear, next, how that refutation had been obtained. 'Shall we return,' he suggested, 'to the manuscript which you permit me to read?'

'Willingly,' said Baccani. 'The position I took in the matter is easily described. I was determined to see the woman's face, before I allowed myself to believe that an estimable married lady could have compromised herself with a scoundrel, who had boasted that she was his mistress. I waited in the street, until the woman came out. I followed her, and saw her meet a man. The two went together to a theatre. I took my place near them. She lifted her veil as a matter of course. My suspicion of foul play was instantly confirmed. When the performance was over, I

traced her back to Mr. Robert Graywell's house. He and his wife were both absent at a party. I was too indignant to wait till they came back. Under the threat of charging the wretch with stealing her mistress's clothes, I extorted from her the signed confession which you have in your hand. She was under notice to leave her place for insolent behaviour to her mistress. The personation which had been intended to deceive me was an act of revenge; planned between herself, and the blackguard who had employed her to make his lie look like truth. There is one thing more to add, before you read the confession. Mrs. Robert Graywell did imprudently send him some money—in answer to a begging letter artfully enough written to excite her pity. A second application was refused by her husband—and what followed on that, you know already.'

Having read the confession, Mr. Mool was permitted to take a copy, and to make any use of it which he might think desirable. His one remaining anxiety was to hear what had become of the man who had planned the deception. 'Surely,' he said, 'that villain has not escaped punishment?'

Baccani answered this in his own bitter way.

'My dear sir! how can you ask such a simple question? That sort of man always escapes punishment. In the last extreme of poverty his luck provides him with somebody to cheat. Common respect for Mrs. Robert Graywell closed my lips; and I was the only person acquainted with the circumstances. I wrote to our club declaring the fellow to be a cheat—and leaving it to be inferred that he cheated at cards. He knew better than to insist on my explaining myself—he resigned and disappeared. I dare say he is living still—living in clover on some unfortunate woman. The beautiful and the good die untimely deaths. *He*, and his kind, last and live.'

Mr. Mool had neither time nor inclination to plead in favour of the more hopeful view, which believes in the agreeable fiction, called 'poetical justice.' He tried to express his sense of obligation at parting. Baccani refused to listen.

'The obligation is all on my side,' he said. 'As I have already told you, your visit has added a bright day to my calendar. In our pilgrimage, my friend, through this world of rogues and fools, we may never meet again. Let us remember gratefully that we *have* met. Farewell.'

So they parted.

Returning to his office, Mr. Mool attached to the copy of the confession a brief statement of the circumstances under which the Italian had become possessed of it. He then added these lines,

addressed to Benjulia:—‘*You set the false report afloat. I leave it to your sense of duty to decide, whether you ought not to go at once to Mrs. Gallilee, and tell her that the slander which you repeated is now proved to be a lie. If you don’t agree with me, I must go to Mrs. Gallilee myself. In that case, please return, by the bearer, the papers which are inclosed.*’

The clerk instructed to deliver these documents, within the shortest possible space of time, found Mr. Mool waiting at the office, on his return. He answered his master’s inquiries by producing Benjulia’s reply.

The doctor’s amiable humour was still in the ascendant. His success in torturing his unfortunate cook had been followed by the receipt of a telegram from his friend at Montreal, containing this satisfactory answer to his question:—‘*Not brain disease.*’ With his mind now set completely at ease, his instincts as a gentleman were at full liberty to control him. ‘*I entirely agree with you,*’ he wrote to Mr. Mool. ‘*I go back with your clerk; the cab will drop me at Mrs. Gallilee’s house.*’

Mr. Mool turned to the clerk.

‘*Did you wait to hear if Mrs. Gallilee was at home?*’ he asked.

‘*Mrs. Gallilee was absent, sir—attending a lecture.*’

‘*What did Doctor Benjulia do?*’

‘*Went into the house, to wait her return.*’

### CHAPTER XLIII.

MRS. GALLILEE’S page (attending to the house-door, in the footman’s absence) had just shown Benjulia into the library, when there was another ring at the bell. The new visitor was Mr. Le Frank. He appeared to be in a hurry. Without any preliminary questions, he said, ‘*Take my card to Mrs. Gallilee.*’

‘*My mistress is out, sir.*’

The music-master looked impatiently at the hall clock. The hall clock answered him by striking the half-hour after five.

‘*Do you expect Mrs. Gallilee back soon?*’

‘*We don’t know, sir. The footman had his orders to be in waiting with the carriage at five.*’

After a moment of irritable reflection, Le Frank took a letter from his pocket. ‘*Say that I have an appointment, and am not able to wait. Give Mrs. Gallilee that letter the moment she comes in.*’ With those directions he left the house.

The page looked at the letter. It was sealed; and, over the address, two underlined words were written:—‘*Private. Immediate.*’ Mindful of visits from tradespeople, anxious to see his

mistress, and provided beforehand with letters to be delivered immediately, the boy took a pecuniary view of Mr. Le Frank's errand at the house. 'Another of them,' he thought, 'wanting his money.'

As he placed the letter on the hall table, the library door opened, and Benjulia appeared—wary already of waiting, without occupation, for Mrs. Gallilee's return.

'Is smoking allowed in the library?' he asked.

The page looked up at the giant towering over him, with the envious admiration of a short boy. He replied with a discretion beyond his years: 'Would you please step into the smoking-room, sir?'

'Anybody there?'

'My master, sir.'

Benjulia at once declined the invitation to the smoking-room. 'Anybody else at home?' he inquired.

Miss Carmina was upstairs—the page answered. 'And I think,' he added, 'Mr. Null is with her.'

'Who's Mr. Null?'

'The doctor, sir.'

Benjulia declined to disturb the doctor. He tried a third, and last question.

'Where's Zo?'

'Here!' cried a shrill voice from the upper regions. 'Who are You?'

To the page's astonishment, the giant-gentleman with the resonant bass voice answered this quite gravely. 'I'm Benjulia,' he said.

'Come up!' cried Zo.

Benjulia ascended the stairs.

'Stop!' shouted the voice from above.

Benjulia stopped.

'Have you got your big stick?'

'Yes.'

'Bring it up with you.' Benjulia retraced his steps into the hall. The page respectfully handed him his stick. Zo became impatient. 'Look sharp!' she called out.

Benjulia obediently quickened his pace. Zo left the school-room (in spite of the faintly heard protest of the maid in charge) to receive him on the stairs. They met on the landing, outside Carmina's room. Zo possessed herself of the bamboo cane, and led the way in. 'Carmina! here's the big stick I told you about,' she announced. 'Whose stick, dear?' Zo returned to the landing. 'Come in, Benjulia,' she said—and seized him by the



coat-tails. Mr. Null rose instinctively. Was this his celebrated colleague? With some reluctance, Carmina appeared at the door; thinking of the day when Ovid had fainted, and when the great man had treated her so harshly. In fear of more rudeness, she asked him confusedly to come in.

Still immovable on the landing, he looked at her in silence.

The serious question occurred to him which had already presented itself to Mr. Mool. Had Mrs. Gallilee repeated, in Carmina's presence, the lie which slandered her mother's memory—the lie which he was then in the house to expose?

Watching Benjulia respectfully, Mr. Null saw, in that grave scrutiny, an opportunity of presenting himself under a favourable light. He waved his hand persuasively towards Carmina. 'Some nervous prostration, sir, in my interesting patient, as you no doubt perceive,' he began. 'Not such rapid progress towards recovery as I had hoped. I think of recommending the air of the sea-side.' Benjulia's dreary grey eyes turned on him slowly, and estimated his mental calibre at its exact value, in a moment. Mr. Null felt that look in the very marrow of his bones. He bowed reverentially, and took his leave.

In the meantime Benjulia had satisfied himself that the embarrassment in Carmina's manner was merely attributable to shyness. She was now no longer an object even of momentary interest to him. He was ready to play with Zo—but not on condition of amusing himself with the child, in her presence. 'I am waiting till Mrs. Gallilee returns,' he said to Carmina in his quietly indifferent way. 'If you will excuse me, I'll go downstairs again; I won't intrude.'

Her pale face flushed as she listened to him. Innocently supposing that she had made her little offer of hospitality in too cold a manner, she looked at Benjulia with a timid and troubled smile. 'Pray wait here till my aunt comes back,' she said. 'Zo will amuse you, I'm sure.' Zo seconded the invitation by hiding the stick, and laying hold again on her big friend's coat-tails.

He let the child drag him into the room, without noticing her. The silent questioning of his eyes had been again directed to Carmina, at the moment when she smiled. His long and terrible experience made its own merciless discoveries, in the nervous movement of her eyelids and her lips. The poor girl, pleasing herself with the idea of having produced the right impression on him at last, had only succeeded in becoming an object of medical inquiry, pursued in secret. When he companionably took a chair by her side, and let Zo climb on his knee, he was privately regretting his cold reception of Mr. Null. Under certain conditions

of nervous excitement, Carmina might furnish an interesting case. 'If I had been commonly civil to that fawning idiot,' he thought, 'I might have been called into consultation.'

They were all three seated—but there was no talk. Zo set the example.

'You haven't tickled me yet,' she said. 'Show Carmina how you do it.'

He gravely operated on the back of Zo's neck; and his patient acknowledged the process with a wriggle and a scream. The performance being so far at an end, Zo called to the dog, and issued her orders once more.

'Now make Tinker kick his leg!'

Benjulia obeyed once again. The young tyrant was not satisfied yet.

'Now tickle Carmina!' she said.

He heard this without laughing: his fleshless lips never relaxed into a smile. To Carmina's unutterable embarrassment, he looked at her, when *she* laughed, with steadier attention than ever. Those coldly inquiring eyes exercised some inscrutable influence over her. Now they made her angry; and now they frightened her. The silence that had fallen on them again became an unendurable infliction. She burst into talk; she was loud and familiar—ashamed of her own boldness, and quite unable to control it. 'You are very fond of Zo!' she said suddenly.

It was a perfectly commonplace remark—and yet, it seemed to perplex him.

'Am I?' he answered.

She went on. Against her own will, she persisted in speaking to him. 'And I'm sure Zo is fond of you.'

He looked at Zo. 'Are you fond of me?' he asked.

Zo, staring hard at him, got off his knee; retired to a little distance to think; and stood staring at him again.

He quietly repeated the question. Zo answered this time—as she had formerly answered Teresa in the Gardens, 'I don't know.'

He turned again to Carmina, in a slow, puzzled way. 'I don't know either,' he said.

Hearing the big man own that he was no wiser than herself, Zo returned to him—without, however, getting on his knee again. She clasped her chubby hands under the inspiration of a new idea. 'Let's play at something,' she said to Benjulia. 'Do you know any games?'

He shook his head.

'Didn't you know any games, when you were only as big as me?'

'I have forgotten them.'

'Haven't you got children?'

'No.'

'Haven't you got a wife?'

'No.'

'Haven't you got a friend?'

'No.'

'Well, you *are* a miserable chap!'

Thanks to Zo, Carmina's sense of nervous oppression burst its way into relief. She laughed loudly and wildly—she was on the verge of hysterics, when Benjulia's eyes, silently questioning her again, controlled her at the critical moment. Her laughter died away. But the exciting influence still possessed her; still forced her into the other alternative of saying something—she neither knew nor cared what.

'I couldn't live such a lonely life as yours,' she said to him—so loudly and so confidently that even Zo noticed it.

'I couldn't live such a life either,' he admitted, 'but for one thing.'

'And what is that?'

'Why are you so loud?' Zo interposed. 'Do you think he's deaf?'

Benjulia made a sign, commanding the child to be silent—without turning towards her. Still observing Carmina, he answered as if there had been no interruption—

'My medical studies,' he said, 'reconcile me to my life.'

'Suppose you got tired of your studies?' she asked.

'I should never get tired of them.'

'Suppose you couldn't study any more?'

'In that case, I shouldn't live any more.'

'Do you mean that it would kill you to leave off?'

'No.'

'Then what do you mean?'

He laid his great soft fingers on her pulse. She shrank from his touch; he deliberately held her by the arm. 'You're getting excited,' he said. 'Never mind what I mean.'

Zo, left unnoticed and not liking it, saw a chance of asserting herself. 'I know why Carmina's excited,' she said. 'The old woman's coming at six o'clock.'

He paid no attention to the child; he persisted in keeping watch on Carmina. 'Who is the woman?' he asked.

'The most lovable woman in the world,' she cried; 'my dear old nurse!' She started up from the sofa, and pointed with theatrical exaggeration of gesture to the clock on the mantel-

piece. 'Look! it's only ten minutes to six. In ten minutes I shall have my arms round Teresa's neck. Don't look at me in that way! It's your fault if I'm excited. It's your dreadful eyes that do it. Come here, Zo! I want to give you a kiss.' She seized on Zo with a roughness that startled the child, and looked wildly at Benjulia. 'Ha! you don't understand loving and kissing, do you? What's the use of speaking to *you* about my old nurse?'

He pointed to the sofa. 'Sit down again.'

She obeyed him—but he had not quite composed her yet. Her eyes sparkled; she went on talking. 'Ah, you're a hard man! a miserable man! a man that will end badly! You never loved anybody. You don't know what love is.'

'What is it?'

That icy question cooled her in an instant: her head sank on her bosom: she suddenly became indifferent to persons and things about her. 'When will Teresa come?' she whispered to herself. 'Oh, when will Teresa come!'

Any other man, whether he really felt for her or not, would, as a mere matter of instinct, have said a kind word to her at that moment. Not the vestige of a change appeared in Benjulia's impenetrable composure. She might have been a man—or a baby—or the picture of a girl instead of the girl herself, so far as he was concerned. He quietly returned to his question.

'Well,' he resumed—'and what is love?'

Not a word, not a movement escaped her.

'I want to know,' he persisted, waiting for what might happen. Nothing happened. He was not perplexed by the sudden change. 'This is the reaction,' he thought. 'We shall see what comes of it.'

Zo had been listening; Zo saw her way to getting noticed again. Not quite sure of herself this time, she appealed to Carmina. 'Didn't he say, just now, he wanted to know? Shall I tell him——?'

Carmina neither heard nor heeded her. She tried Benjulia next. 'Shall I tell you what we do in the schoolroom, when we want to know?' His attention, like Carmina's attention, seemed to be far away from her. 'Are you listening to me?' she asked—and laid her hand on his knee.

It was only the hand of a child—an idle, quaint, perverse child—but it touched, ignorantly touched, the one tender place in his nature, unprofaned by the infernal cruelties which made his life endurable to him; the one tender place, hidden so deep from the man himself, that even his far-reaching intellect groped in vain to find it out. There, nevertheless, was the feeling which

drew him to Zo, contending successfully with his medical interest in a case of nervous derangement! That unintelligible sympathy with a child looked dimly out of his eyes, spoke faintly in his voice, when he replied to her. 'I'm listening to you,' he said. 'What do you do in the schoolroom?'

'We look in the dictionary,' Zo answered. 'Carmina's got a dictionary. I'll get it.'

She climbed on a chair, and found the book, and laid it on Benjulia's lap. 'Now look,' she said.

He humoured her silently and mechanically—just as he had humoured her in the matter of the stick, and in the matter of the tickling. Having opened the dictionary, he looked again at Carmina. She had not moved; she seemed to be weary enough to fall asleep. The reaction—nothing but the reaction. It might last for hours, or it might be at an end in another minute. An interesting temperament, whichever way it ended. He opened the dictionary.

'Love,' he muttered grimly to himself. 'It seems I'm an object of compassion, because I know nothing about love. Well, what does the book say about it?'

'He found the word, and ran his finger down the paragraphs of explanation which followed. 'Seven meanings to Love,' he remarked. 'First: An affection of the mind excited by beauty and worth of any kind, or by the qualities of an object which communicate pleasure. Second: Courtship. Third: Patriotism, as the love of country. Fourth: Benevolence. Fifth: The object beloved. Sixth: A word of endearment. Seventh: Cupid, the god of love.'

He paused, and reflected a little. Zo, hearing nothing to amuse her, strayed away to the window, and looked out. He glanced at Carmina. 'Which of those meanings makes the pleasure of her life?' he wondered. 'Which of them might have made the pleasure of mine?' He closed the dictionary in contempt. 'The very man whose business is to explain it tries seven different ways, and doesn't explain it after all. And yet, there is such a thing.' He reached that conclusion unwillingly and angrily. For the first time, a doubt about himself forced its way into his mind. Might he have looked higher than his torture-table and his knife? Had he gained from his life all that his life might have given to him?

Left by herself, Zo began to grow tired of it. She tried to get Carmina for a companion. 'Come and look out of window,' she said.

Carmina gently refused: she was unwilling to be disturbed. Since she had spoken to Benjulia her thoughts had been dwelling

restfully on Ovid. In another day she might be on her way to him. When would Teresa come!

Benjulia was too preoccupied to notice her. The weak doubt that had got the better of his strong reason still held him in thrall. 'Love!' he broke out, in the bitterness of his heart. 'It isn't a question of sentiment: it's a question of use. Who is the better for love?'

She heard the last words, and answered him. 'Everybody is the better for it.' She looked at him with sorrowful eyes, and laid her hand on his arm. 'Everybody,' she added, 'but you.'

He smiled scornfully. 'Everybody is the better for it,' he repeated. 'And who knows what it is?'

She drew away her hand, and looked towards the heavenly tranquillity of the evening sky.

'Who knows what it is?' he reiterated.

'God,' she said.

Benjulia was silent.

#### CHAPTER XLIV.

THE clock on the mantelpiece struck six. Zo, turning suddenly from the window, ran to the sofa. 'Here's the carriage!' she cried.

'Teresa!' Carmina exclaimed.

'No; Mama.' She crossed the room, on tiptoe, to the door of the bed-chamber. 'Don't tell!' she said. 'I'm going to hide.'

'Why, dear?'

Zo explained in a whisper. 'Mama said I wasn't to come to you. She's a quick one on her legs—she might catch me on the stairs.' With that explanation, Zo slipped into the bedroom, and held the door ajar.

The minutes passed—and Mrs. Gallilee failed to justify the opinion expressed by her daughter. Not a sound was audible on the stairs. Not a word more was uttered in the room. Benjulia had taken the child's place at the window. He sat there thinking. Carmina had suggested to him some new ideas, relating to the intricate connection between human faith and human happiness. Slowly, slowly, the clock recorded the lapse of the minutes. Carmina's nervous anxiety began to forecast disaster to the absent nurse. She took Teresa's telegram from her pocket, and consulted it again. There was no mistake; six o'clock was the time named for the traveller's arrival—and it was close on ten minutes past the hour. In her ignorance of railway arrangements, she took it for

granted that trains were punctual. But her reading had told her that trains were subject to accident. 'I suppose delays occur,' she said to Benjulia, 'without danger to the passengers?'

Before he could answer—Mrs. Gallilee suddenly entered the room.

She had opened the door so softly that she took them both by surprise. To Carmina's excited imagination, she glided into their presence like a ghost. Her look and manner showed serious agitation, desperately suppressed. In certain places, the paint and powder on her face had cracked, and revealed the furrows and wrinkles beneath. Indifferent to all demonstrations of emotion which did not scientifically concern him, Benjulia quietly rose and advanced towards her. She seemed to be unconscious of his presence. He spoke—allowing her to ignore him without troubling himself to notice her temper. 'When you are able to attend to me, I want to speak to you. Shall I wait downstairs?' She warned him, by a sign, to say no more. He took his hat and stick—to leave the room; looked at Carmina as he passed her; and at once went back to his place at the window. Her aunt's silent and sinister entrance had frightened her. Benjulia waited, in the interests of physiology, to see how the new nervous excitement would end.

Thus far, Mrs. Gallilee had kept one of her hands hidden behind her. She advanced close to Carmina, and allowed her hand to be seen. It held an open letter. She shook the letter in her niece's face.

In the position which she now occupied, Carmina was hidden from Benjulia's view. Biding his time at the window, until Mrs. Gallilee moved, he looked out.

A cab, with luggage on it, had just drawn up at the house.

Was this the old nurse who had been expected to arrive at six o'clock? The footman came out to open the cab-door. He was followed by Mr. Gallilee, eager to help the person inside to alight. The traveller proved to be a grey-headed woman, shabbily dressed. Mr. Gallilee cordially shook hands with her—patted her on the shoulder—gave her his arm—led her into the house. The cab with the luggage on it remained at the door. The nurse had evidently not reached the end of her journey yet.

Carmina shrank back on the sofa, when the leaves of the letter touched her face. Mrs. Gallilee's first words were now spoken, in a whisper. The inner fury of her anger, struggling for a vent, began to get the better of her—she gasped for breath and speech.

'Do you know this letter?' she said.

Carmina looked at the writing. It was the letter which she

had written to Ovid, that morning ; the letter which revealed his mother's sordid treachery, his mother's cold-blooded cunning and cruelty ; the letter which declared that she could endure it no longer, and that she only waited Teresa's arrival to join him at Quebec.

After one dreadful moment of confusion, her mind realised the outrage implied in the stealing and reading of her letter.

In the earlier time of Carmina's sojourn in the house, Mrs. Gallilee had accused her of deliberate deceit. She had instantly resented the insult by leaving the room. The same spirit in her—the finely strung spirit that vibrates unfelt in gentle natures, while they live in peace—steadied those quivering nerves, roused that failing courage. She met the furious eyes fixed on her, without shrinking ; she spoke gravely and firmly. 'The letter is mine,' she said. 'How do you come by it ?'

'How dare you ask me ?'

'How dare *you* steal my letter ?'

Mrs. Gallilee tore open the fastening of her dress at the throat, to get breath. 'You impudent bastard !' she burst out, in a frenzy of rage.

Waiting patiently at the window, Benjulia heard her, and started to his feet. 'Hold your damned tongue !' he cried. 'She's your niece.'

Mrs. Gallilee turned on him : her fury broke into a screaming laugh. 'My niece ?' she repeated. 'You lie—and you know it. She's the child of an adulteress ! She's the child of her mother's lover !'

The door opened as those horrible words passed her lips. The nurse and her husband entered the room.

She was in no position to see them : she was incapable of hearing them. The demon in her urged her on : she attempted to reiterate the detestable lie. Her first word died away in silence. The lean brown fingers of the Italian woman had her by the throat—held her as the claws of a tigress might have held her. Her eyes rolled in the mute agony of an appeal for help. In vain ! in vain ! Not a cry, not a sound, had drawn attention to the attack. Her husband's eyes were fixed, horror-struck, on the victim of her rage. Benjulia had crossed the room to the sofa, when Carmina heard the words spoken of her mother. From that moment, he was watching the case. He never even looked round—when the nurse tightened her hold in a last murderous grasp ; dashed the insensible woman on the floor ; and, turning back, fell on her knees at her darling's feet.

She looked up in Carmina's face.



A ghastly stare, through half-closed eyes, showed death in life, blankly returning her look. The shock had struck Carmina with a stony calm. She had not started, she had not swooned. Rigid, immovable, there she sat; voiceless and tearless; insensible even to touch; her arms hanging down; her clenched hands resting on either side of her.

Teresa grovelled and groaned at her feet. Those merciless hands that had laid the slanderer prostrate on the floor feebly beat her bosom and her grey head. 'Oh, Saints beloved of God! Oh, blessed Virgin, mother of Christ, spare my child, my sweet child!' She rose in wild despair—she seized Benjulia, and madly shook him. 'Who are you? How dare you touch her? Give her to me, or I'll be the death of you. Oh, my Carmina, is it sleep that holds you? Wake! wake! wake!'

'Listen to me,' said Benjulia, sternly.

She dropped on the sofa by Carmina's side, and lifted one of the cold clenched hands to her lips. The tears fell slowly over her haggard face. 'I'm very fond of her, sir,' she said humbly. 'I'm only an old woman. See what a dreadful welcome my child gives to me. It's hard on an old woman—hard on an old woman!'

His self-possession was not disturbed—even by this.

'Do you know what I am?' he asked. 'I am a doctor. Leave her to me.'

'He's a doctor. That's good. A doctor's good. Yes, yes. Does the old man know this doctor—the kind old man?' She looked vacantly for Mr. Gallilee. The sound of the fall had roused him. He had hurried to his wife: he was now bending over her, watching for the first return of life.

Teresa got on her feet, and pointed to Mrs. Gallilee. 'The breath of that She-Devil poisons the air,' she said. 'I must take my child out of it. To my place, sir, if you please. Only to my place.'

She attempted to take Carmina in her arms—and drew back, trembling. The rigid face faintly relaxed; the eyelids closed, and quivered. The old nurse breathlessly watched her.

Mr. Gallilee looked up from his wife. 'Will you help me?' he asked. His tone struck Benjulia. Neither weak nor faltering, it was the tone of quiet sorrow—no more.

'I'll see to it directly.' With that reply, Benjulia turned to Teresa. 'Where is your place?' he said. 'Far or near?'

'The message,' she answered confusedly. 'The message says.' She signed to him to look in her hand-bag—dropped on the floor.

He found Carmina's telegram, containing the address of the lodgings. The house was close by. After some consideration, he

sent the nurse into the bedroom, with instructions to bring him the blankets off the bed. In the minute that followed he examined Mrs. Gallilee. 'There's nothing to be frightened about. Let her maid attend to her.'

Mr. Gallilee again surprised Benjulia. He turned from his wife, and looked at Carmina. She had sunk back on the sofa. Otherwise there was no change. 'For God's sake, don't leave her here!' he broke out. 'After what she has heard, this house is no place for her. Give her to her old nurse!'

Benjulia only answered, as he had answered already—'I'll see to it.' Mr. Gallilee persisted. 'Is there any risk in moving her?' he asked.

'It's the least of two risks. No more questions! Look to your wife.'

Mr. Gallilee obeyed in silence. When he lifted his head again, and rose to ring the bell for the maid, the room was silent and lonely. A little pale frightened face peeped out through the bedroom door. Zo ventured in. Her father caught her in his arms, and kissed her as he had never kissed her yet. His eyes were wet with tears. Zo noticed that he never said a word about Mama. The child saw the change in her father, as Benjulia had seen it. She shared one human feeling with her big friend—she, too, was surprised.

*(To be continued.)*

## A Month's Change.

RED ROSE how fair to deck a maiden's hair :

Twine it among thy tresses of rich brown,

O wistful lady ; let its plume hang down

Upon thy cheek, kissing the blush rose there,

And dream of love until the stem be bare.

Red rose how brave to deck a maiden's grave :

Twine it among the straight ranks of dank grass,

O lover watching this sad autumn pass ;

Where only a chill wind breathes let it wave,

Casting wan leaves o'er her thou couldst not save.

F. FRANKFORT MOORE.

## Frescoes.

BY OUIDA.

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(CONCLUDED.)

*Lord Llandudno, Milton Ernest, Berks, to Hon. H. Hollys,  
British Embassy, Rome :—*

‘Dear Hollys,—It was no use. She *would* come back, and she asked a whole tribe of people, and then to top it the P. and P. suddenly fixed their arrival for the end of the month, so there was no more to be said, and all my ingenuity in having succeeded in persuading Esmée into these visits was bootless. She made the painter begin her portrait, and, whatever else she means, she’s getting plenty of good work out of him. The fellow is amazingly handsome; he reminds me of somebody, but I can’t remember of whom. Esmée certainly puts him to the fore a good deal; she talked about him so to the P. and P. that she made her point and was allowed to present him to them. But this may all be done only to rile Tabby. There is no knowing with a woman like Esmée what she’s really up to; she knows the world down to the ground, and if she makes a move she’s a purpose in it; but yet again she’s a weathercock. The Italian adores her, that’s plain to be seen; when we were last here, he’d the whip hand of her; now, she’s the pull over him. I suppose it’s only her fun, but it will be rough on the poor devil. I don’t see what we can any of us do. Esmée isn’t a chicken. If you’d sent the diploma’d and decorated ass that you spoke of, there would have been none of this bother. She *says* she’s going to Cannes next month, and has ordered the “Glaucus” to refit and get in Mediterranean trim. She can hardly take the painter on board with her. The C. of O. informs me that you and I are responsible for all this scandal. You, I know, are; but I don’t see where I come in; by the way, in case we’re obliged to have more to do with this man, can’t you learn really something about him?’

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*Mr. Hollys, Rome, to Lord Llandudno, Milton Ernest :—*

‘Dear Llanny,—There is nothing to learn; he never concealed where he came from; he’s the natural son of a woman of Fonta-

nella, and his grandfather was a *buttero*—that is, please your ignorance, a wild-cattle-keeper. The priest of Fontanella—who has a history too, for he is a noble and took the vow of poverty and entered the Church in consequence of the tragic death of a mistress—loves him, but has nothing to do with him : as to that all the folk of Florinella are agreed. The priest educated him and maintained him afterwards at the University of Rome, where he took high honours. He then studied art (living very miserably, I suspect) in Paris and Munich, and then spent his life between his studio (a garret) in Rome and the priest's little house up in the hills at Florinella, where he painted those frescoes in the little church which led to my most unfortunate acquaintance with him. That is all that is to be known. He is now thirty-three years of age. You will see it is all quite creditable, more creditable perhaps than yours or mine ; but, as society is constituted, Esmée must no more look at him than if he were a forger or a hangman. I suppose we are all humbugs, but *telle est la vie*. If you are at your (very clever) wits' ends on the spot, what am I a thousand miles off ? What I should most fear would be an irreparable breach between Esmée and the C. of O., and the adoption as *chaperon* of some frisky matron like her friend Mrs. Alsager, who will let her do just as she likes and get compromised in a hideous fashion. My chief hope lies in Renzo himself ; I think he is a man of honour. I think if he see mischief ahead he will go away out of it.'

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*Lord Llandudno, Milton Ernest, to Hon. H. Hollys, Rome :—*

'I have never believed in Joseph ; especially would Joseph be an impossibility when a beautiful young woman offered herself *en tout bien tout honneur*. Don't be alarmed ; she's not at that point yet, perhaps never will be. As yet she is only having her portrait taken, and I bet it will beat "La bella di Tiziano." The C. of O. presides at the sittings, looking like Duty on a rock staring at Danger, or something of that sort. The Alsager is going on the "Glaucus," and that may mean any amount of mischief. Vic. was at my house the other day, looking very blue, poor boy. He won't take his punishing without whimpering. How could that marriage miss fire ? You and I should have had nothing to do except to sign our names to the most perfect settlements the world ever saw. To think, too, how the properties dovetail into one another ! It is flouting Providence, but she has done the same thing twenty times a year ever since she left her schoolroom.'

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*Mr. Hollys, Rome, to Lord Llandudno, Milton Ernest*  
(telegraphs):—

‘Do you mean to say you think the affair with R. *serious*?’

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*Lord Llandudno to Mr. Hollys (writes):—*

‘It looks like it. She put me off the scent last time, but now I begin to think the C. of O. not altogether so wrong. However, it may be all caprice. She is, after all, only having her portrait taken; why should we interfere? I tried to say something this morning, and she looked me in the face with the coolest little smile and just said: “It is so much nicer than a photograph that people can sell whether one lets them or not.” Just as if she couldn’t have Carolus Duran or Baudry to take her portrait! Just as if she hadn’t been painted half a score of times before now! I do believe he has a great influence over her; she has left off using the kolb to her eyes; she wears her hair in loose soft masses instead of crimping and frizzing her fringe; she has taken to quite simple sorts of gowns with old-fashioned gold girdles and gypsaïres as her only ornament. “I suppose that’s æsthetic?” I said to Hermione, and Hermie regarded me with scorn: “How can you be so silly? It’s Renzo. She sent some of his sketches over to Worth with orders. Esmée never did care a bit about the æsthetes, but she likes to please him, don’t you know?” I did know, and I groaned, and I know the man ought to go away, but on my life I don’t see why he should throw it all up merely to oblige us. Besides, he is honestly in love with her; he is the only person in the house perhaps who does not know it, but he is so. As she is perfectly charming and enchantingly considerate towards him, why should he turn his back on all that?’

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*Mr. Hollys to Lord Llandudno:—*

‘You know as well as I do that men who are poor *do* turn their backs on all that when they are gentlemen, and I think he is a gentleman; but I grant the temptation is terrible if he really can see he has any influence over her. I confess the whole thing seems so incredible to me that it is like a nightmare. What does she mean to do? She never can mean to marry him. He hasn’t a *soldo*, and not even a name!’

*Lord Llandudno to Mr. Hollys :—*

‘I certainly don’t dare hint to her that she does, but I think her quite capable of it. She would love to do it if only for the pleasure of braving the C. of O. and quarrelling with all the rest of us. She is her own mistress, you know. No hope of the Lord Chancellor *here*. Frankly I want to be out of it, so I’m going to shoot bears and steinbock with Hohenlohe in Styria. I think if she’s left quite alone she’ll see the folly of the thing. The sense of opposition keeps her obstinate; not, mind you, that there’s anything definite yet. They’re only still at this eternal portrait. The portrait will be grand; he handles the dead gold and the scarlet with amazing skill; you certainly knew what you were about and picked out a man who could paint. Hermione and Jack Herbert have come to terms; they’ll be married some time after Christmas. Everybody quite pleased all round. “*That* would spoil it to *me*,” said Esmée the other day. I declared I quite believed her. She likes a chopping sea and a stiff wind when she’s out. If she do lose her head about the Roman it will only be out of “contrariness.”’

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*Leonis Renzo, Milton Ernest, to Don Eccellino Ferraris,  
Florinella-sopra-Subiaco :—*

Dearest friend and reverend Father,—You are quite right; the suspicion which has come into my mind concerning the Earl Alured poisons the peace and pleasure I had found in my pursuits here. It may be altogether fanciful and unfounded, but the mere shadow of it is enough to darken my path; especially when I am in her presence the thought is oppressive and of an almost unbearable humiliation. If I could speak of him I could ask her permission to seek through any papers he may have left for more evidence, more confirmation, but this it is impossible to do; I could never bring my lips to frame a hint of it. After all, too, I should most likely see nothing more. The mere pastime of an English nobleman with an Italian girl would leave no impression on the life and memory of such a man as he, even if he loved her, as the name on the doe’s collar would suggest. These great gentlemen break so many of these poor butterflies upon the wheel in a summer’s day.

‘The portrait grows; they say it is like the style of Cabanel, which incenses me; Cabanel is a great master, but I hope I am not borrowing from him or any one; I paint what I see as I feel it, and if I have any master at all, I go farther back than Cabanel, and straightway to the Venice of the Cinque Cento. Miladi is all that

is sweetest and most kind ; nay, she is too good to me ; it offends all her own people, that I can see. When the portrait is done she will go away at once on a vessel of her own southward, and the long, cold, blank English winter faces me ; well, if only there will be light enough I shall occupy myself. I rise at daybreak to go on with the Theocritian frescoes ; I cannot bear her to suppose that I purposely delay my work for sake of the ease of my life here. If the weather serve I mean to finish them by next Easter. She does not, I believe, return until then, as she goes from the Riviera straight to her house in London, without coming here after her winter in the South. She asked me a little abruptly this morning if I would not like to go to Rome for the winter ; she said I was not to think for a moment that I was bound to finish the ballroom until it was quite convenient to me ; if my habits or my health needed a warmer air in winter—then she stopped and looked at me and I did not altogether understand her, but I felt my face grow hot, for I knew that I had no money to return to Rome ; I spent all I had in coming here and in the purchase of the colours ; and certainly I would die sooner than tell her that. When I hear all these people talk of going here, going there, of flying this way and that, like so many happy birds, I understand that to be poor is to be a bird without wings, like that poor hopeless, ugly apteryx which is the laughing-stock of naturalists and the cruel jest of nature.

‘The lord who is a sort of *tutore* came to me just now when I was alone and commenced conversation. He does not speak French very well, but I could fairly understand him. He said some hard things of miladi. He ended by hinting to me that she was “*coquette et fine mouche*.” I said to him that I did not think that concerned me ; and that it was not for me, who received many benefits from her, to listen to blame of her. This confused him a little. He got up, said quickly, “*Eh bien, je m’en lave les mains !*” and then added that he was himself going away into Styria. He seemed to wish me to give him some assurance, but I did not see that any was needed. They seem to attach much more importance to me than I can possibly claim. Is she a coquette ? I do not think so. And if she be, what is that to me ? I am only a man who paints her portrait and her ballroom. And I may be something she would think yet lower than the sweeper who clears her terrace of its leaves !

‘This morning whilst it was still very early she entered the ballroom when I was beginning my work. She has risen early the



last week or two; I have seen her, and once or twice met her in the gardens soon after sunrise. "Why do you work so hard?" she asked me when she had looked at what I was doing. "Why are you in such haste to have finished the thing? Are you tired of England, of Milton?" I told her that I thought common honesty needed that the work should be done with as little waste of time as it could. "And when it is done," she said in her abrupt fashion that yet is graceful too, "will you go away and have no regret for us?" I felt myself grow pale, for I knew that I should suffer,—much,—but I answered her that if in the end she considered the work well done I should have no regrets: none; I should have only great gratitude. "Gratitude!" She repeated the word with some anger. She looked very beautiful. She had a white woollen gown on with black fur all round it, and she had a quantity of red autumn roses in her hand. "It is we who owe you gratitude," she said warmly. "It is I who owe you gratitude; you give my house beautiful fancies and images, and you have made me think, you have made me feel; you have made me conscious of the emptiness and the egotism of my life." I said nothing—what could I say—to *her*? "I think you are far too proud," she said after a little pause, "and yet you have so far too much humility. Do you mean to say you will like to remain here all alone all the cold, dreary, lonely winter? You will be miserable. You have no idea how cold it is, how unutterably dull!" I told her I did not think that it would be colder than my fireless garret had been in Paris or was even in Rome, when the tramontana blew; and I said that I should not be miserable, because her memory—and her portrait—would remain with me. Perhaps it was wrong to say even so much. But it did not offend her. She smiled and gave me one of her roses, and ordered me to come to breakfast with her. I hesitated very much, but she insisted so that I could not refuse. I breakfasted with her and the little Lady Hermione before any one else staying in the house was up, and we laughed and chattered and were merry and happy, and the smell of the sweet wet grass and the late roses came through the windows which we could leave open a little, for it is here what we call St. Martin's summer. Well, it is much to have these beautiful hours to remember even if afterwards one goes out into endless hunger and darkness for evermore!

'But, looking back on it all, here, as I write alone, the thought comes to me which seems in itself almost madness. Is it possible that she would—that she does—love me? What must I do? Counsel me.'

*Don Eccellino Ferraris, Florinella-sopra-Subiaco, to Leonis Renzo, Milton Ernest, &c., &c. :—*

‘My beloved Son,—It is not for me to counsel you at such a distance from you as I am, and having so long and altogether abandoned the great world. But your nature is noble, your pride is great, greater perhaps because some would deny your right to it; act therefore as both these bid you. That this lady is drawn towards you I can well believe, that you care for her more than you know I have long felt; but I confess I see nothing but suffering in store for you through this passion. If you wish to leave the place and the country, command me; you know my purse, meagre as it is, is always open to you, and here you may find, as I have done, peace at least of conscience, if pains of memory pursue you even to these heights.’

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*Leonis Renzo to Don Eccellino Ferraris, &c., &c. :—*

‘You are, as ever, good beyond my merits. If she leave here, I will stay on and complete the work. If she remain, you are right—I must go. Peace will be no more mine wherever my steps may turn.’

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*The Countess of Charterys to Mr. Thomas, Yacht ‘Glaucus,’ Cowes Harbour :—*

‘Take her round to Marseilles and there wait telegram from me.’

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*Leonis Renzo, Milton Ernest, to Don Eccellino Ferraris, Florinella-sopra-Subiaco, &c., &c. :—*

‘She is gone. I suppose some pressure was brought to bear on her, or perhaps she wished to escape from a position that became an embarrassment. I do not know; I think she has some love for me; but I hear always the voice of that old lord saying, “*Elle est coquette et fine mouche.*” Yet I wrong her; I am base to want more than she has given me—the utmost sweetness and delicacy and consideration to the last; so much more than I should have been warranted in expecting! The evening before she left she came to take farewell of me when I was at work on her portrait, which is all but finished; a few touches to the drapery and to the dog alone are needed. She said to me, “If it be very cold indeed you had better go to Rome, or will you come out to us at Cannes and make another picture of me amongst the palms?”

Her voice was very low and kind. It cost me very much to look at her calmly and say as I did say simply, No. I think she understood that it was no discourtesy. She said nothing else. She gave me her hand. There were tears in her beautiful eyes. Mine were dim. You were right. There is pain, great pain, for both of us, but hers will soon pass, rich, happy, adored, surrounded, amused with a thousand distractions as she is and will be; but mine—— No doubt what she feels for me is mere interest, mere compassion, rather than the divine pity of Desdemona; perhaps she has respect for me, too, because I have never flattered her. But it is impossible that she seriously loves me. If she did, she is far removed from me as though mountains were between us. If I could accept her were she to offer it, how she would despise me then and for ever!

‘I have my first taste of an English winter to-day. It is bitterly cold, and rains, and hails, and snows. It is impossible to paint. I continue my work in the library; I have seen many cases and drawers full of drawings, manuscripts, and engravings, still to examine and arrange. It is a noble room, and the great fire lit at either end fills it full of mellow colour. I could be quite happy here if—if—if! I have sent to my friend Vico in Rome to dispose of the pictures there are in my studio if he can, even if he get but twenty francs a piece, and send me the money; I can leave here if she return, as it is her choice to do sometimes at a day’s notice. She wrote me a most kind and pretty note this morning. It cost me much to answer with a few formal lines, but she would despise me if I let myself do more. She has reached Cannes a fortnight ago. She describes her villa with its orange woods and gardens and its walls of many-coloured marble, and the little harbour all to itself, with such deep water that her yacht can anchor there. She asks me to go out and see it, and paint it all: she puts aside my refusal as if it had never been uttered. Do you think she would be so cruel as to play with me so far? Yet I am a fool and thankless. No doubt she only means it in innocent kindness and never dreams that I shall distort it so.’

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*Mr. Hollys, Villa Gloriette, Cannes, to Lord Llandudno,  
St. Gowan’s, Merioneth:—*

‘Dear Llanny,—I have run over here for two days to see the object of our mutual anxiety. Vic. is near too by my advice: he’s got his old tub in the Villefranche bay. I think she is looking worried; she says very little to me. I asked her about Renzo,

and she said very coolly that he was in England at work on the frescoes, and hang me if I could muster up cheek enough to say any more. She has a way of looking at you that shuts you up at once. I pleaded Vic.'s cause; but I suppose very badly, for she only looked bored, and said it was a pity to bring boys out anywhere near that horrid Monte Carlo. She had been there herself and couldn't see why people cared to go, but they did, and I had far better send Vic. home. I objected that an English Duke aged four-and-twenty, who was in the Life Guards, was not to be treated like a child in the nursery. She looked more bored, and asked me the name of a horrid cactus that looks like a tennis racquet covered with bristles. I don't know its name; I don't know why such a creature should have a name at all. I am out of temper. I candidly confess it. I am very fond of Esmée, and I don't like being treated as if I were somebody seen at the gaming tables or the railway station for the first time to-day. I don't like Mrs. Alsager either, who is staying with her and does her no good. When I tried to get something out of Mrs. A. as to Renzo, the woman only laughed and said she thought he was coming here! The C. of O. is in bed with a chill. She sends me little pencil notes three or four times a day—agonising, frigid, terrible little effusions. She evidently considers I could marry Esmée to Vic. out of hand if I did my duty. She has fever from the sun, rheumatism from the mistral, smells typhus in the rosebuds beneath her windows, and cholera in the mignonette; is invisible, impotent, and still terrible, restricts her diet to Liebig and her receptions to the English clergyman; if Renzo come to Cannes she will, she declares to me, be carried out of her bed in a *chaise à porteurs* to die. On the whole the atmosphere is depressing despite a buoyant barometer, a gay thermometer, and a sea, and a sun for ever smiling. I don't see what I can do. As I said before, if Esmée mean it she'll do it, and my only hope is in the man himself; I don't believe he will come to Cannes, and I do believe he is too great an artist to be a blackguard. I go back to Rome to-night and am thankful. I feel like a fool when I look at Esmée and tell myself that I don't dare to ask her a point-blank question. But you didn't dare either! Sincerely yours, H. H.

'P.S. Vic. lost a hundred thousand francs yesterday over there, and he would go back this morning first train. Lelah Dé is at the Hôtel de Paris, and I am very greatly afraid she'll get hold of him.'

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*Leonis Renzo, Milton Ernest, to Don Eccellino Ferraris,  
Florinella-sopra-Subiaco :—*

‘You were wiser than I, dear old friend. I see in an English journal which I can just spell out that the young Duke is at Cannes also. Will she end in doing what all her friends wish? It must take so much courage, so much constancy, in a woman to resist the pressure of her world; and she is courageous but not constant. At least I should say so. I may do her injustice; I did her much in the first day I knew her. The days go by drearily, and are very cold and dark! I am glad when the night comes, and the lamps are lit, and the big dog and I are alone after dinner in this library which has become almost a home to me. The head-keeper asked me yesterday if I would not go out shooting. I could see that no words could have measured the might of his scorn when he had heard that nothing would induce me to kill any bird or beast that lives. The entire household thinks me a harmless lunatic, but they begin to like me.

‘I work sedulously at the fresco when the light permits; I ride sometimes; I read a good deal. There are thousands of Latin and of French books, and some few Italian ones. Her portrait stands on a large easel at the north end of the library. Both the dog Berwick and I look at it, and regret,—in our divers ways. I am sure that he knows it is hers.

‘It was Natale yesterday: a great deal was given away in her name by the stewards to all the poor for many miles around, but the people looked to me sullen. Perhaps they feel that she does not care a straw about them or know A from B amongst them. It is a pity. She might so easily make herself beloved.

‘At the end of my solitary dinner they brought me the national pudding, a gorgeous, indigestible globe; I thought it very nasty; Berwick approved and ate it. To-day there is a violent snowstorm. The whole country is white, the yews look very grand against the snow. I have been out and seen the deer fed: Nerina nibbled at her turnips from my hand. It is intensely cold. I pity the peasantry. The stewards give away a great deal of coal and clothing.

‘She has sent me another little letter; she says she is sitting amongst geraniums in full flower on the edge of a marble wall overlooking a blue sea with the thermometer at 20 Réaumur in the sun. She asks me if I sometimes do not envy that? I envy the flowers that are near her—yes—but I answer her merely, and that is the truth too, that I am growing enamoured of these keen

winds, this white landscape, these sombre woods, these dusky oak-panelled chambers with their warm fires and their painted oriels. Perhaps I grow so fond of them because I know that in a little while I shall leave them for ever, and my place will know me no more.

‘I have made a discovery which overwhelms me so that I can scarcely see the paper on which I write to you. I have discovered documents that make me believe I was the legitimate son of the Earl Alured; at least so it seems to me, beyond any possibility of error. This is how I found them. Forgive me if I be incoherent. In arranging the drawings, etchings, &c., I had the permission of miladi to open all drawers, cabinets, and cases; she gave me an old and very imperfect manuscript catalogue to help me. In one corner of the library there is a secrétaire of fine Louis XV. work. It was full of old letters, old cards, old sketches; I did not like to touch these, though she had expressly told me to look anywhere I chose. As I was about to close the doors of the bureau I suppose I must have accidentally touched some unseen spring, for a panel turned and a secret drawer shot out: in the drawer was a packet of letters, a curl of dark hair, and a folded paper. I lifted the paper to re-shut the little drawer and then saw that it was a record of their marriage in the church of S. Helena in Rome. I copy it below; you see there is no reasonable doubt of it. I will write you more to-morrow. I feel stunned and the room goes round with me. If I am not the sport of a delirious dream—oh God, if my mother were living!

‘My letter was too late for the post last night. I add all I know. I send you copies of the letters that were tied up with my mother’s hair. They are her letters—*cara anima!*—Italian, ill-writ, overfond; telling so little and yet saying all. I see the whole story in these piteous letters. He married her privately, and was ashamed of her, and she was left in obscurity and he went into the world, and then came jealousy and misunderstanding and rage and doubt on her side, and anger and indifference on his; and there must have been some Iago near to suggest to her the doubt that her marriage had been only a farce, and so she ran away blindly, madly, to her own old home and found her father dead. There are only her letters. There is nothing to tell us what Lord Chatterys thought or did. I imagine he was a heartless man who found his liberty welcome and did not seek her and so never knew of me. I dare say he was ashamed of his folly in wedding a peasant girl from the Sabine hills. One cannot tell. That is all

a blank. But the records of the marriage are clear. The date is thirty-four years ago. I am his lawful son. I am her cousin.

‘Two days have passed since I wrote you. I am somewhat calmer. A deep gladness has succeeded the madness of my first amazement. The shadow is gone off my life. I am any man’s equal now. I do not know whether these things would content the law; they content me! How strange the hand of fate that led me here! My poor mother! how plainly one sees her story in those letters! The passion, and pain, and jealousy, and doubt, and all the pitiful weakness and ignorance are so sacred to me. They did not touch him, I suppose they only irritated him. Some men are made so. When they are thus, women only break their hearts on them like frail ships on a rock. He must have been cruel to her. I cannot forgive him. But what I think of more than of her or of him, heaven pardon me, is Esmée; I may call her so now. I shall stand in her place; she will hate me. After being the recipient of her goodness and her trustfulness, I shall despoil her of her kingdom if ever I make this known. It is I who am Lord Charterys! She will hate me. . . . I have been out in the great dusky woods. It is very cold and the wind is high, but it did me good; it cooled the fever in me. I feel as if I had done her some treasonable wrong. This is childish, I know, but I cannot help myself. If she had not trusted me with these library keys I should never have known my own rights.

‘To-day my friend in Rome sent me word no one would buy the sketches, but he sold a little marble that I had, which is said to be of Mino di Fiesole, for thirty napoleons, which he sends me. I will go up to London and get the address of a great lawyer from our consul there, and take the lawyer’s opinion on the facts. I shall give him no names, so there will be nothing risked. I have spoken of the Earl Alured with the land-steward, who knew him well. He describes him as a wayward, inconstant, and unstable man. He was thrown by his horse shying near these very gates and died instantly on the road. Perhaps had he lived he might have sought my mother out in after years. I will try to think so.

I have been to London and seen a famous man of law. I showed him copies of all the documents without any names to them, and, after careful examination, he gave it as his opinion that the marriage was quite legal (as a merely religious marriage was so at that period in Italy, and this Earl was of our own reli-

gion, as the whole race was in old days), and that the proofs were sufficient to give the son, by such a marriage, title to inherit, provided the son was distinctly proved to have been born at the date I described. That, we know, is easily done. The lawyer said there would be, no doubt, long litigation: the other side would contest; marriages in Italy before the Independence were irregular, and often secret, and so subject to suspicion; the case would go up to the House of Lords; it would be long, but there could be no doubt, he thought, of the ultimate result if the facts and the papers were as I stated to him. I thanked him and came back here.

‘When the great gates were thrown open in the twilight I felt that I came home. It was very odd to know that I was the owner, the master here; an English earl—I! Then as I sat before the hearth with her dog’s head on my knee, other thoughts came over me. The lawyer had said *the other side would contest*. The cold sentence had gone to my heart like a knife. She and I should be enemies! There would be nothing for either of us to be ashamed of in the facts that would be made public, yet it would be hateful, we should be foes. The lawyer, indeed, suggested that perhaps the present owner of the property and name might yield without law if convinced of the justice and veracity of the claim. Yes: she would yield at once, my beautiful proud cousin! She would go out of my house, and leave me master here, and never see my face again! What should I have profited?—and there is a meanness and a treason about it, too; but for her condescension to me, her trust in me, I could never have known this. I could never even have guessed that my poor mother had wronged herself by her hasty flight and unhappy suspicions, and that I had been born in wedlock. It seems treacherous, unworthy, to use the results to dispossess her of her heritage. This is what torments me; I can see no way by which I can come by my own without injury and pain to her.

‘There is more still to remember: as I say, when once she knows that I am the Earl Alured’s legitimate heir she will wait for no decision of the court; she will scorn to defend herself by any legal quibble or flaw that may present itself; she will give up everything and—hate me for ever. Or, even if she be so generous as not to hate me as an usurper, she could never, she would never, forgive the man who took advantage of a search which she permitted to him, of a sojourn to which she invited him, and whilst he stayed beneath her roof used his leisure to undermine her claims—claims that the law and the world have allowed her all her life. Even if she believed all these papers to be genuine



(and she might even not believe that), she would despise the person who brought them forward against her. This is my torture, my perplexity. So well I love her that to be recognised as the Earl of Charterys by all England will avail me nothing if I lose her smiles. Though my honour be cleared, and my pride is now a permissible thing, I am more miserable than I was before I opened that *secrétaire*. I see no way by which I can make good my title and yet retain her favour. If I show her these papers I must seem her foe for ever; I may even seem a traitor too! I would sooner remain Leonis Renzo whom she respects and whom—perhaps—she loves. Counsel me, dear and reverend friend.'

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*The Don Eccellino Ferraris, Florinella-sopra-Subiaco, to Leonis Renzo, Milton Ernest:—*

'I dare not advise you, my son, in a matter of such lifelong moment. Your whole future hangs on your decision. I see the difficulty that fronts you. You love your cousin better than name, or place, or power. I do not say that you are wrong. You hesitate to alienate her from you by an effort to secure the recognition of your just rights; I understand your hesitation; even if it did not make her your enemy, it would be at least a barrier (insurmountable to a proud woman) to any confession on her part of affection. She would never submit to the appearance in your eyes and the world that such a confession at such a time would present. On the other hand, your cousin may not be worthy such high devotion, such extraordinary sacrifice. You will remember that when you saw her first she seemed to you insolent, capricious, artificial, a mere creature of the world and of its follies. Are you sure that your colder estimate was not the juster? The fascination she now has for you may blind you to the truth. If this be so, you may lose a career of happiness and usefulness, a life of peace and dignity, the possession of a noble name, for a woman too idle and shallow to appreciate such a sacrifice if she knew of it; and she will never know of it or suspect it. All your suffering, all your loss, will be borne mutely and be unrecognised. I do not dare to sway your decision either way. All I say is, think long, and do nothing on impulse. There is no need of haste. You are expected to remain where you are until your work is finished. It will be time to decide when she returns. The generosity you contemplate is almost superhuman, but I believe you are capable of it and would not even regret it if you knew her worthy it. If!—you will have had my other letter in which I answered the marvellous intelli-

gence you gave me ; alas ! that your poor mother had not courage enough to confide the truth to me ! My poor Leonis ! when I think of your many years of privation and unrecognised genius, my heart bleeds for you ! I pray heaven that these tidings of great joy come not too late.'

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*Leonis Renzo, Milton Ernest, to Don Eccellino Ferraris,  
Florinella-sopra-Subiaco :—*

'The days are gloomy and seem very long. I feel in a strange confusion and agitation ; your kind calm letter does not lessen my trouble, for you put so clearly before me the truth that "either way I must repine." If I claim my inheritance she is surely lost to me for evermore ; and if I bury the secret in my own heart, how can I ever approach her ?—I, who shall still seem to every one a mere adventurer, a mere beggar, and who would be scorned even by herself if I so far forgot the dignity of poverty as to say a syllable of supplication to one so far removed from me. Either way it seems there is no chance for me to be able to approach her with any hope of becoming more to her than I am now. You say truly there is no haste. I have locked the papers up in a little iron box, and, unless I choose, no eyes, save mine and yours, will ever look on them. Does it seem to you so very quixotic that I can think of the possibility of going on all my life long with this secret untold, this great birthright unclaimed ? Do you not know I would do anything to see her eyes smile at me ? and the smile would never come there if she knew it—never, never more. It seems strange as I move about here to realise that it is all mine, actually mine !—when I have never had anything of my own except a box of colours and a hired garret with a cast or a bust here and there.

'I sit doing nothing all the long evenings with the dog at my feet, and it seems to me that I can never take it all, since for me to take it she must lose it. And she was so thoughtful of me, so considerate, so delicate, so kind—shall I repay her by robbing her ? I work on when the light lets me at the frescoes ; these at least I wish to do me honour. The other day I laughed outright when the major-domo spoke with some little insolence about them ; it seemed so ridiculous. If he had only guessed who I was, how he would have cringed and kissed the dust ! To think I have the right to sweep all this *valetaille* out of the house ! But it is not the power or the possession of this birthright of mine that makes the temptation ; it is the leisure, it is the repose, it is the ability

to pass all my life in the pursuit of the ideal, to surround myself with all that is beautiful and spiritual—but then, without her, even with all that my life would be only a “home without music,” a “*ruche sans abeilles*.” What can I do? I sit and muse hour after hour, night after night, and am no nearer to any determination. I look at her portrait, and the thought that I could ever despoil that glorious creature seems to me almost a crime. I have not heard from her again. If she should marry the young Duke —. No, I do not think she will do that.

‘The winter is long, long, long. It is now the 26th of February; in Rome how the land laughs, how the flowers spring, how the blood dances in one’s veins so near to March! Here all is snow and wind, or fog and sleet, and the poor deer look shivering and sad under the leafless trees amongst the black frosted bracken.

‘The house-steward has just brought me a telegraphic message he has had from her. It is sent from Paris and merely says, “We come home to-morrow.” To-morrow! Like that! Without a word of preparation. He says it is the way “my lady” always does. My God! what shall I say to her? How shall I receive her? I know not whether I am most overjoyed or most wretched. If only I knew what I should most wisely, most rightly, do! And to think that it is all not hers but mine—that she is in truth my guest! She has been away four months. For some time she has not written to me. I may have become no more to her than the nameless painter of her frescoes. If so—well, I will never take up my rights. It would be too much like vengeance. If she seem to care at all—well, then I will go away, send her portrait to the Salon, perhaps conquer a name in the world great enough to make it not too impossible for me to say to her “I love you.” No: I will not take away her little kingdom from her; I have a wider kingdom—Art. She trusted me. She shall not have cause to repent it.

‘The “to-morrow” is now “to-day.” I could sleep not at all. It is now noon; she may be here at any moment. I scrawl this with a crayon in the ballroom. There is still snow, but the sun is shining. They have sent her Russian sledge to meet her with the three Russian horses. Berwick is gone of his own accord with the sledge. He would never leave me before. It seems he knows. How shall I meet her? What shall I say? I feel as if I were false to her. It is absurd, but I cannot resist the feeling. I hear a noise of sleigh-bells, of voices, of great doors opening and shutting, of dogs barking: then all is still again—she is come.

'It is nearly four o'clock and almost dark. I scarcely see to scrawl this to you by the light of the fire. The frescoes are not one-half finished; this vexes me much; but the weather has been so utterly against all work. Her friends will tell her I have purposely delayed. I suppose I shall not see her till to-morrow. The man who especially waits on me has been in with wood, and says that Lady Cairnwrath has returned with her; no one else; but that many people are expected in a week from this. By that time I shall be gone. She must get the frescoes finished as she can. . . . They have brought me word that her ladyship sent me her compliments and wished to see me in the library; she is taking her tea there after the journey. Will I go at once? I cannot refuse. She has not forgotten. I tremble at the thought of seeing her, though I long so greatly to do so. I feel as if she would read all my secrets in my face. I love her so well and yet I cannot say a word! Pray for me, dear Father. When next I shall write I shall be in Rome. Rome is the Mater Dolorosa, the Mother of Consolation.

. . . . .  
'This was not posted last night. I open it to add that no one under heaven was ever so greatly blessed as I. Even now as I sit in the clear morning light, in my own chamber, I cannot believe in my own paradise; I cannot believe that, having wrestled so long, the angel blesses me at last! When the servant brought me her message in the ballroom, I got up and walked through the house, and felt like a drunken man as I moved. To see her in the library! It seemed to me as if the very walls would speak to her, as if the French *secrétaire* would find a voice! I was like one in a dream. I found myself still as in a dream; standing before her in the familiar room. It was dusk, for which I was thankful, the long dusk of these grey English days. There was a gleam of low light from the windows which look west, and the full warm glow of the great fire. It shone on the silver tea-tray and samovar, on the white bear-skin by the hearth, on her as she stood there. She looked very pale and a little tired; she had what they call a tea-gown on, a thing all soft old lace and gleaming trailing satin: a thing which most becomes her, I think, of all she wears. She put her hand out to me and I bent low over it. I said nothing; I could say nothing. She, too, seemed more silent than her wont. She murmured in a hurry, indistinctly, all sorts of little phrases: there was fever at Cannes, her grandmother was unwell, she had been so bored, it was only London emptied out by the Mediterranean, she hated the mixture of scorching sun and icy wind, she liked a fast gallop over a wet Berkshire road much better: I remember

all these sentences now ; at the time I do not think I heard them. I was gazing at her, and thinking how I loved her, and of how I must go out of her presence and away from her in silence. I could see no other way. All this while I never spoke a word.

‘She came closer to me in the half-glow from the firelight and the lingering daylight ; and we stood quite near together on the hearth. I still could not speak ; I kissed again the hand she again held out to me ; I kept thinking if she knew—if she knew !—Perhaps I looked strangely, for her eyes had a startled glance in them. She said at last, in her old, pretty, quick fashion, “Well, have you not a word to say ? Are you displeased that I am home again ? What have you done on the walls ? Have you been very dull ?” I could not have uttered a word to save my life or hers ; I could only gaze at her, and I saw she grew very red ; rosy-red, like the hothouse camellia she had at her breast. “Why would you not come to Cannes ?” she said, without looking at me. “I wanted you ; could you not understand ?” I said nothing ; I could hear my heart beat as if it would break my breast, but I said nothing. Then she touched my hand with hers. “Why will you be so proud ?” I heard her ask in quite a whisper. “You do like me a little, why don’t you tell me so ? I do not care what any of them think : I only care for you. We might be so happy, if you would not be so proud !” Then I fell at her feet and kissed them. Later that night I told her all the truth. I showed her all the papers ; she does not mind. What is hers is mine, what is mine is hers. The world can think what it likes. If it deem her the most generous of all living women, it will only be right for once !’

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*The Lady Charterys, Milton Ernest, to Don Eccellino Ferraris,  
Florinella-sopra-Subiaco :—*

‘I love you already ! You must come to us at Easter. He means to buy that deserted palace above Florinella, and make it beautiful, so that we may often visit you. He says Bramante built it, and that you have often regretted to see it forsaken.’

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*The Lady Cairnwrath of Othwestry to Lord Llandudno,  
White’s Club, London :—*

‘A great scandal has been most mercifully and providentially averted. Lord Charterys—for this gentleman is indisputably Lord Charterys ; I see a strong resemblance in his features to poor

Alured's—behaves in the most admirable manner; he will not hear of the truth being made public. He says the world may think him the debtor of his wife if it please. It does not really matter, because of course, either way, the first son she has will bear the same title, and ultimately inherit. I am very thankful the publicity is avoided; and I reflect with pleasure that I never allowed the obscure name and place of the unknown painter to prevent my recognition of him as a high-bred gentleman. You will remember that I always said he had *l'air noble*. It will certainly be difficult, as you observe, to make society comprehend why we consent to such an apparently unequal, indeed improbable, union; but when it is known that we all approve, no one will venture on an adverse comment; every one will be aware that I should never give my countenance to what was either unwise or incorrect. Besides, I do not see why, in a private sort of manner, the facts should not be made known. If you think proper you can tell one or two of your friends in the window at White's, quite confidentially; it will soon be all over the town, and it will perhaps be better than to allow people to suppose a *mésalliance* possible to *us*. Esmée has been a great and sore anxiety to me for many years. I am thankful that my responsibility will pass at last into other hands. She is quite *extraordinarily* in love with him, and obedient to him. I should never have supposed she could so change through the mere influence of a sentiment.'

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*Leonis Renzo, Milton Ernest, to Don Eccellino Ferraris,  
Florinella-sopra-Subiaco:—*

'You must come for Easter, and leave your sanctuary on the hills for once, to give us your benediction, my first and my holiest friend!'

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*Mr. Hollys, Rome, to the Lady Charterys, Milton Ernest:—*

'I am thoroughly bewildered. But I heartily congratulate you both. I feel, as our beloved Transatlantics say, "a little mixed." When will the frescoes get finished? I suppose you forgive me?'

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*The Lady Charterys, Milton Ernest, to Mr. Hollys, Rome:—*

'Yes: I forgive you even the rude nonsense you wrote. I shall always call him Renzo. We shall remain here all the summer, and he *will* finish the frescoes!'

## The Admiral's Ward.

BY MRS. ALEXANDER.

### CHAPTER XLI.

THE boating expedition was charming, perhaps not the less so because Mrs. Crewe declared her dread of the water would not permit her to enjoy it, and she therefore remained at home. Some rambles on the shore and along the cliffs, with a drive to a ruined castle at some miles' distance, made Denzil's visit pass but too quickly. Though he parted from his mother and Laura with cheerfulness, promising to secure a longer holiday next time, it was very lonely after his departure.

'It is not that he is a great talker,' said his mother, as she and Laura sat together under the oak-tree in the evening; 'but he listens so well, and knows so much; he is so kind and well-tempered and considerate for a man! Ah! the woman he marries will be lucky.'

'Yes; he is very, very kind and pleasant and well-informed,' said Laura, heartily; but added, with a spice of mischief, 'I have heard Mrs. Trent say that marriage is an extraordinary touchstone; that men who have been dutiful sons, kind brothers, pleasant friends, sometimes turn out disagreeable, tyrannical husbands.'

'Then it must be their wives' fault. I am sure Mrs. Trent need not talk—she does as she likes with her stiff six-and-eight-pence of a husband! I do not think much of *that* Mrs. Trent. It is rather extraordinary, considering the terms you and I are on, that she never asked me to her house!—as if the widow of an officer in the Royal Navy was not more than the equal of the best professional man in London.'

'Well, dear Mrs. Crewe, she never asked *me* to dinner save once, and that was with the Admiral; yet I know she likes me—she is always pleased to have me at luncheon, which seems to be the repast specially suited to the entertainment of poor relations, and I like best to go then. I have her to myself; she is always so bright and pleasant; and Mr. Trent, though far from uncivil, evidently considers it a hopeless loss of time to waste words upon so insignificant a personage; yet I am sure he would do me a service if he could.'

'And pray why are you sure?' asked Mrs. Crewe with some

severity, and Laura making no immediate answer the conversation turned into other channels.

The Admiral arrived on the appointed day.

Both Mrs. Crewe and Laura were struck by the haggard, worn look of his kind handsome face. True he had had a long tiresome journey, having come across the country by many changes of trains from his brother's place in Worcestershire. He was evidently glad to rest in the cool quiet room prepared for him, and said little or nothing that evening. But he soon recovered, and seemed to enjoy his quiet room, the simple beauty of his surroundings, the soft fresh air. The Admiral was fond of an early walk with Laura to the beach or the pier to see the fishing-boats come in, or to watch the children hunting for periwinkles, while he talked gently and kindly to the fishermen, who soon recognised him to be at least 'a noble captain'; and so they used to come back slowly, with leisurely enjoyment of the sights and sounds, the beauty and the freshness around them, to the cottage to Mrs. Crewe, and a neat tempting midday meal and their letters, which were not delivered at the Dingle till noon. So time went on so softly, so evenly, that the dwellers in this pleasant 'sleepy hollow' could not feel the rapidity of its ceaseless flow, and were conscious of a vague surprise when Sunday came round.

One afternoon, on her return from an unusually long ramble with her guardian, Laura, to her great joy, found a letter awaiting her from Winifrid, dated from Dresden. They had at the last moment altered their route, as she had persuaded dear Reginald to let her revisit the scene of so much pleasure and sorrow, and to take a look at her father's grave. 'I cannot tell you, dear Laura,' the letter went on, 'how present you are to me in our old haunts; I listen for your voice, and I think of all your goodness to me, and what a wayward imp I was! The dear father's grave is well cared for—our good old landlord has seen to it. All the people we know have been so pleased to see me, even the Hausfrau with whom, you remember, I used sometimes to quarrel.'

Then followed a glowing account of how well Baby had borne the journey and behaved; of how she feared Reginald was a little bored, as he did not care much for picture galleries and things of that kind; that they were going on the next day to visit Prague, and thence to Franzinsbad, where she begged her dearest Laura to address her reply. Finally, the words, 'Be at rest about me, I think all is well, and I am happy!' filled the cup of Laura's content to the brim; she let herself taste to the full the quiet enjoyment of the hour, and left the future to take care of itself.



Denzil was not able to revisit the Dingle till the middle of the following week. Then he arrived, looking pale and tired enough, yet bright and animated.

His friend Captain Ritson was, he said, in great spirits; the operation on his little girl's eyes had been happily accomplished, and they hoped in another month to be able to bring her back to her seaside home. They were quite satisfied with Collins.

'Then they are easily pleased,' said Mrs. Crewe. 'Does the house look clean? and have you any idea if she makes the dustmen call regularly?'

Denzil answered the first query in the affirmative, but acknowledged his ignorance as to the other.

'And my precious Topsy? I trust that dear cat is not neglected.'

'Far from it; she is an immense favourite, and sits for hours in Mary Ritson's lap. I am afraid Topsy is faithless.'

'That I am sure she is not,' said Mrs. Crewe, stoutly; 'some allowance must be made for peculiarities of nature.'

Laura felt an unusual degree of pleasure in the return of her kind, sympathetic friend, and showed it with sisterly frankness. After the 'high tea,' which was their evening meal, the little party strolled out upon the lawn to watch the receding tide and the last gleams of a fine sunset. The Admiral fell into conversation with Mrs. Crewe on the subject of moon-blindness, which he had often seen among sailors—*à propos* of the operation which Denzil had mentioned.

The latter was walking apart, smoking his cigar, when Laura came from the house with a shawl she had sought for Mrs. Crewe. After wrapping it round her she turned away, and said, with the familiarity that had grown greatly between them of late, 'Denzil,'—he threw away his cigar and joined her at once—'I have ventured on a very audacious project since you were here. I was cogitating it then, but I have quite made up my mind since.'

'And what may that be?'

'There is a lovely little nook round that spur of rock behind the Dingle, with a glimpse of blue sea to the right, and a tangled mass of brambles and wild leaves over the lower rocks, with just two larch-trees, behind which at sunset the light comes in the most marvellous way. It has taken hold of my imagination. I feel as if I must and could paint it; and, do not laugh, but I think, if I can at all work it up to my idea, I shall try to get it into the Royal Academy.'

'Laugh! I shall not laugh,' said Denzil, directing his steps and hers to the low wall which formed a terrace over the beach.

'Try, by all means; even if you do not succeed it will be an incentive to work, and no great harm done.'

'Yes, but I want very much to succeed. You must come and see the place and my sketch, my idea of representing it, and help me with your advice.'

'The best I can give is at your service, but I am afraid it will not be worth much.'

'Oh, it is worth something. It would be such a grand thing for me to have a picture exhibited. Fancy what importance it would give me in the eyes of that little Jew man who ordered the copy I am to finish when I go back. I do not think he would venture to call me "my dear" any more!'

'The deuce he does!' cried Denzil. 'The insolent beggar!'

'Oh, he does not mean to be insolent,' said Laura. 'It is a sort of official manner; the more he "dears" you, the more he beats you down.'

'I don't like the notion of your selling things to these fellows. It is a shame you should be obliged to go to them.'

'It is not like you to talk in that way; if you are to live by work, you cannot pick and choose your patrons and purchasers. Why, I felt as if I loved that little Jew when he said, "You do me a good faithful copy of Stanfield's 'Brig in a breeze,' my dear, and I'll give you seven pounds." You would have been edified to hear how I stood up for myself, and haggled and squabbled until I got an advance of ten shillings.'

Denzil laughed. 'I cannot fancy you haggling, that is more in my mother's line. She is the most generous soul in the world, and yet she dearly loves a bargain.'

'Oh! I am growing quite hardened. I remember when it was agony to me to name a price, not so very long ago. But I am much stronger in every way than I was.'

'I think you are—much stronger and better in every way,' he returned, looking straight at her with kindly, thoughtful eyes, as if he rejoiced in the new life that was visible in her whole face and expression, in her colour and carriage. Laura flushed with a sudden consciousness of the sorrow and mortification of which he was thinking—was it possible he had suspected her of still grieving over the wreck he had witnessed? She had more than once thought she perceived that he judged her harshly, imagining that she had not conquered her feeling for Reginald. How little he knew!—but while she thought thus Denzil was speaking again. 'We must have a consultation over the picture to-morrow,' he said; 'and when that is over, I—I want some advice from you, or rather your help in making a decision.'

'I am sure I shall be very glad to talk over any of your affairs ; but I am afraid I cannot be much help to you.'

'Yes, you can,' returned Denzil, decidedly ; and there was a long pause, during which they both gazed at the rippled stream of light stretching out across the bay, and listened to the soft murmur of the receding tide.

'Do you know anything of Mr. Piers' whereabouts at present ?' said Denzil, suddenly speaking out of his thoughts.

'I think they must be at Prague just now, but I am not sure. I am to write to Franzinsbad, on or after the fifteenth.'

'Do they make a long stay ?'

'Winnie mentions no plans.'

The weather for the first two days after Denzil's arrival was rainy and overcast, but a brief thunderstorm cleared the atmosphere, and the third morning was all a painter could desire. Laura therefore determined to begin her great undertaking, and made all due preparation in the forenoon, Denzil having undertaken to accompany the Admiral in his morning walk.

At dinner Mrs. Crewe announced that it was her intention to visit a deserving and bedridden old woman (under the Admiral's guidance) and take her some tea and sugar, as the want of those necessities and inability to read the Bible were her two principal deprivations.

'The amount of spiritual light bestowed upon some of these poor ignorant souls is truly marvellous, and it would be a sin and a shame to let a woman of that kind faint for want of a cup of tea,' observed Mrs. Crewe. 'What are you going to do, Laura ?'

'Oh, I shall spend the afternoon sketching in the cove. Perhaps you will look in there and see how I am getting on.'

'With pleasure, my love. Denzil, what are your plans ?'

'I shall be resolutely idle, and enjoy myself. I had a long swim this morning while you and Laura were gathering gooseberries, or cutting cabbages, and I feel I am entitled to rest.'

'But you are going to advise me,' cried Laura.

'I do not forget, it will not be fatiguing.'

As soon as the sun had got round a little to the west, Laura gathered her materials together and started for her favourite spot. Denzil, who was lounging under a tree on the lawn, came forward directly she issued from the open door and relieved her of part of her load, walking beside her rather silently while she talked freely.

'One of the many advantages of my cove is that two paths lead to it, one over the hill at the back, as we are going now,

and one along the beach when the tide is out ; we can return that way.'

'I know the place. I used to ramble all about here when I was staying with Ritson five or six years ago. It is a place to make one forget the hurry and fret of life. I should like such a haven when I am a little older.'

'A little older, Denzil ! When you are an old man of three-score years and ten, if you will : it would be shirking work to shrink from the burden and heat of the day before.'

'But suppose I were a man of fortune ?'

'Even so, I think you should work, and I am sure you would.'

'I am not sure,' said he, smiling ; 'I believe I am really a lazy fellow, only circumstances have been a powerful whip. By the way, I always fancied that cousin of yours, Reginald Piers, would have gone in for public life.'

'I thought so too. I suppose he finds life too pleasant for such serious labour. You cannot think what a sweet, lovely place Pierslynn is, large enough for dignity and beauty, but not too large for homeliness and comfort.'

Denzil stole a sharp quick glance at her ; as she spoke her countenance wore an expression of quiet, restful content, not the slightest trace of what might be construed into envy or regret was to be seen there, and Denzil's own brow cleared as he looked.

'I think,' he resumed, 'that young Piers had one ingredient that would push him into public life—that is, vanity.'

'You think Reginald vain ? I never observed it.'

'I confess I do not view him favourably ; still he can be pleasant, and I dare say open-handed, though I believe self is his ruling motive—not a narrow, ill-natured selfishness that worries over trifles, but a deep principle that never relinquishes a strong desire, cost what it may.'

'You are a little harsh ; but I begin to think I never quite knew Reginald, or rather that circumstances have greatly changed him.' She sighed slightly, and they walked on in silence for some way. When Denzil spoke again it was on a fresh topic, and they proceeded, with occasional silences and pleasant desultory talk, till they reached the spot from which Laura had taken her sketch.

Then there was the business of opening the colour-box and arranging the folding easel, the fixing of the artist so as to catch the exact points which she had sketched in previously.

'You see,' said Laura, 'if I can only get enough of the blue misty distance there to the left out to sea, then the brambles and heather and mossy rocks, and those two lovely larch-trees with the light behind their upper branches, it would make a pretty

picture. "O wad some power the giftie gie" me to make the dumb trees and sea and stones speak to the world as they speak to me; if I could put the pensive tenderness and repose they express on canvas, I would indeed be happy; but that requires genius, and I fear I have not enough for such a consummation.'

'I do not know,' returned Denzil, thoughtfully and candidly; 'I am not sure that I have the power to recognise it if you had—at all events, it is no common gift to understand what nature tells us, without speech or language. Still you have got in these stones and the tint of the heather very well; your distance might be more distant—don't you think these rocks with a fringe of foam round them brought in in the middle distance would make the background farther off?'

A long interesting discussion ensued, and then Laura set to work diligently, while Denzil lay down on the soft short mossy grass at a little distance and watched her in silence, just answering her occasional observations shortly, as if he was enjoying the *dolce far niente* too utterly to talk.

Some time passed, and then he rose, strolled slowly away to where the little wavelets came lapping the beach softly, caressingly, and stood there in thought for some minutes; then returning, stood near Laura for a while, making an occasional remark on her work.

'Don't you think you might rest now?' he said at length.

'But I am not tired.'

'Have you forgotten that you are to give me—well, to help me to decide a matter of importance, at least to myself? I waited patiently till you were free to hear me.'

'Oh yes, I am quite ready,' laying her palette carefully aside. 'I think I have done pretty well this morning. In another half-hour the sky behind the trees will be much richer. Well?' looking up at Denzil, who had sat down on the piece of rock beside her, and leaning his elbow on his knee rested his cheek on his hand.

He did not speak for a moment, and then said rather slowly:—

'You perhaps remember my telling you some weeks ago that I might possibly go to Japan? The mail is nearly due on the arrival of which I shall probably have to decide.'

'Yes, I remember,' returned Laura, feeling suddenly chilled and shocked at being confronted with this painful possibility. 'I am sure both for your mother and myself I hope you will not go.'

Denzil plucked a handful of heather, pulled it to pieces hastily, and flung it from him; then turned to Laura, and looking straight and steadily at her, said:—

'That depends upon you.'

'On me!' said Laura, genuinely surprised. 'How so?'

'Are you then still so much engrossed by another that you cannot understand why my future is at your disposal?' cried Denzil, impatiently. 'How is it you do not understand, you do not feel that I love you! even though you may be indifferent to me! Tell me, how shall I decide respecting the appointment I expect? Will you be my wife—and give me an object to work for, even if I leave you for a while to make my position more worthy of you?—or will you take the hope from me?—for, perhaps against probability, I *have* hoped.'

Laura sat silent, bewildered, looking back with the swift glance of memory at many an incident which she now felt ought to have shown her that Denzil was more than a friend, yet half incredulous. 'I do not seem able to believe it,' she said slowly, and without embarrassment. 'We have been so tranquilly happy together, you have done me so much good, is it not a pity to change such a friendship for—for a more unquiet feeling?'

'But,' returned Denzil, his strong kindly face lighting up with an expression she had never seen in Reginald's, 'suppose feeling gives you no choice? I did not *choose* to fall in love with you; but, living with you, knowing you in bitter trial, in the brave silent struggle against heavy odds, in the strength and tenderness of your everyday life, who could help loving you as I do, with my whole heart?' He took her hand as he spoke and bent his head till his brow rested upon it, a gesture so loving and reverent that Laura could scarce keep back her tears; while his words seemed to rend away some cloud or curtain that had hidden the depths of her own soul, and she perceived how necessary he had grown.

'But, Denzil,' gently drawing away her hand, 'are you quite sure of yourself; quite certain that your friendly interest, the absence of other women (you go so little into society), have not misled you? I am half afraid of——' she paused.

He smiled. 'I am very certain of myself; it is of *you* I want to make sure. Tell me how I stand with you, now that you know my true feelings. Can you love me? Will you be my wife? I know I have little to offer of this world's goods now, but I have my foot on the ladder, and you are not the woman to shrink from beginning humbly with the man you love—if you will love me, Laura?'

Laura covered up her face in her hands, unable to master the emotion which brought quick tears to her eyes.

'I am afraid to believe, afraid to trust. Ah, Denzil! I have suffered so much, and I have passed through it all into such rest

and contentment, that I fear to come out of the soft grey shadows of my life even into sunshine.'

'Dearest,' said Denzil, drawing nearer to her, 'there is very little brilliancy in the existence I want you to share; there is very little change in our relationship either; only we shall draw closer to one another, and I shall know that you are all my own; that which we have called friendship will but deepen into a more absorbing attachment. I am not often presumptuous, Laura, but I think, I believe, I could make you happy in the quiet home-like way that suits you.'

'Are you indeed so earnest?' said Laura, impressed by the depth and seriousness of his tone. 'Is it possible that you imagine me really necessary to you?'

'You are! I do not say that if you reject me I should never strive or hope or recover myself again—I trust there is stuff enough in me to bear up even under so heavy a blow—but—' a short expressive pause—'my life would be better and happier with you than it ever can be without you. Listen to me, Laura. When all was going fair and well, when I first met you, I liked you; but, as I dare say you saw, I was tremendously taken with Winnie Fielden—Mrs. Piers. She was the loveliest girl I had ever met, and so bright and pleasant; however, I soon saw that, although he kept it very quiet, Piers was as far, ay farther, gone than myself about her; I saw there were rocks ahead for all of you, and yet it was out of my power to prevent the mischief. The day that Winifrid spoke to me about her wish to go to Germany, I was sure of what I suspected before—that she recognised your cousin's feeling for her, and feared for herself. Then, when the mysterious quarrel arose between you and your *fiancé*, I guessed you had come to a knowledge of the truth, and I felt for you heartily. I watched you with the deepest interest, and I understood the fortitude, the faithfulness of a nature that could keep so brave a front as you did. Then I went away; I was glad to go, glad not to be vexed with the presence of a girl I could have loved well had she cared for me; but in my lonely hours at sea I thought oftenest of you. Your cousin's marriage did not surprise me, I knew what the end would be. When I came back I was delighted to find you with my mother. You made her house a real home to me; you were the most interesting companion I had ever had. Your true unaltered affection for your cousin—your supplanter!—the quiet harmony of your life, all were unutterably restful to me; I felt soon that nothing the world could give me would be complete without you—and—speak to me, Laura! I have at times horrible pangs of jealousy when I think that Reginald Piers is still perhaps a

rival, or rather the man you thought he was. It makes me savage to think you ever cared for him. If that is all past and gone, might I not be your faithful companion for the rest of our journey ?'

'I am greatly startled,' she said slowly; 'I never dreamed that you cared for me in *this* way. It is sweet to be loved, and I scarce know how the knowledge of your affection will affect me; I confess I do not like to think of your going away, my life will be very dull without you—and if, indeed, I can make you happy, if you are sure you will be satisfied with so poor and insignificant a partner as myself——'

She stopped abruptly, her cheek growing pale, her heart beating painfully, overcome with the mixture of pain, pleasure, remembrance, fear—astonishment that she was on the point of accepting Denzil Crewe.

But he again caught her hand and tenderly kissed it.

'Do not hesitate,' he said; 'you see how dear you are to me. You have known me intimately, and surely know that I am at all events honest and true; and if hearty love and warmest sympathy can make a woman happy, you will have both. I have spoken abruptly, but it could not be otherwise, you could not understand that I loved you till I told you so; now let me feel that I have a sure anchor—that I may go away, with the blessed hope of finding you when I come home ready to share all the best I can gather together for you.'

Laura did not speak for a moment, but she left her hand in his, and he watched her with earnest, eager eyes.

'I think,' she said at length, with a sweet hesitation, 'that after all we ought to make each other happy, for if sympathy and understanding cannot make us mutually helpful, I know not what can.'

'You will then promise to be my wife when I return to England—that is, within a year from this day?' said Denzil, still holding her hand and looking at her with all his soul in his eyes.

Laura thought yet a moment; then, raising her eyes to his with a frankness too serious to be shy, said, softly but distinctly, 'I will.'

Denzil again kissed the hand he held, and pressed it to his heart. 'Laura,' he exclaimed, and there was a tone of deep controlled emotion in his voice that thrilled her strangely, 'you give me new life, new energy.'

Neither spoke for a few minutes; both hearts were full, the light of a new, a solemn happiness hushed them, as the stillness of earliest dawn is most profound just before the first songs of greeting burst forth from wood and field.



Then Laura rose, with soft downcast eyes and a changed expression, as if the rising consciousness of secure happiness shone through the outer shell of her humanity, and imbued it with beauty 'that was all from within.'

'I cannot paint any more—to-day, at least,' she said, and began to collect her painting materials together with trembling hands.

'No; but you can stay a while longer,' said Denzil, coming to help her; 'I have so much to say. I may find the expected letters which will oblige me to start for Yokohama within a fortnight on my return. Accounts received, since I last spoke to you of this project, show the necessity of examining into the state of things.'

And he proceeded to speak fully of his own plans and prospects; of his hope of an honourable and profitable career; of his regret at the necessity of leaving his now affianced wife for such a length of time (he could not hope to return before twelve months), but his determination to do so because of the advantages to be reaped from his expatriation. Laura felt almost dizzy with the sudden change that a few words had wrought in her life: almost unable to believe that she was calmly discussing a future to be passed with Denzil, who a few hours ago was but a new friend. How wonderfully at home with him she felt! how quietly happy! How every word of his displayed an honest, resolute, kindly nature!

'And how pleased my mother will be,' were the concluding words of one sentence.

'Do you really think so?' said Laura, a little uneasily. 'I know she is fond of me, and kind to me, but she scarcely thinks any one good enough to be your wife.'

'If she be not pleased, she is not the woman I take her for.'

'I hope I am not unworthy to be the wife of a good man,' said Laura, with gentle dignity. 'But a mother might well be excused if she objected to my want of all worldly recommendations.'

'My mother knows too well what you can and will be to her son not to welcome you with open arms. *How* wide she will open them!' added Denzil, a happy laugh flashing over his brown face, showing his strong white teeth, and sparkling in his large hazel eyes. 'Must we go, Laura? It cannot be six o'clock yet!—yes, it is. Come then, before we leave this gate of heaven, give me one kiss, the seal of our betrothal!'

He drew her to him, holding her with a close embrace to his breast, pressing his lips to hers with clinging warmth; then Laura knew his was a lover's kiss, and that she had never felt one before.

## CHAPTER XLII.

THE next day was still young when Denzil broke the news of his engagement to his mother, without any preamble.

Laura had gone to look for a book the Admiral wanted, and on her return to the sitting-room, where Mrs. Crewe was busy over the week's accounts, Denzil advanced, and taking her hand, exclaimed :—

'Mother, Laura and I have a secret to tell you.'

'I do not think you have,' she returned, shutting her account-book with a slap, and coming up to Laura she opened wide her arms. 'I am far too experienced a woman of the world not to see how matters were tending. My love,' folding her in a huge embrace, 'I receive you as a dear daughter; for I am sure you will make my precious boy happy, and that is more than rank or riches to me. I rejoice on your account too, dear Laura; for I *will* say you are a lucky girl to have won such a heart, such a disposition, as my Denzil's.

'Mother!' he exclaimed in a tone of remonstrance.

'Do not interrupt, Denzil—I say no more than I have right to; you might, I am sure, have chosen whom you liked; but I think you have chosen wisely. God bless you, my dear children; may you be happy in each other!'

And bending down her head on Laura's shoulder, Mrs. Crewe shed a few tears; finally she embraced her son, and sat down declaring that now she felt her task in life was done, as her dear boy had found a suitable partner.

'How will the Admiral take it?' were her next words, with a slight accent of doubt and a look towards her son.

'He has already taken it well and kindly,' said Denzil. 'I thought it right to ask his consent before speaking to Laura; I feared he might not think me a good enough match for his ward, but——'

'My dear Denzil! I consider you a match for any one,' interrupted his mother.

'Others may not take quite your view of the matter,' he said, with a smile. 'However, I am happy to say he accepted me most kindly, provided I found favour in Laura's eyes; and even did me the honour to express his satisfaction in committing her to my care.'

'So well he might,' said Mrs. Crewe, emphatically.

All this time Laura had not spoken, and had contented herself with returning her intended mother-in-law's embrace warmly; she now said softly, 'Dear Mrs. Crewe, I will try to be a good, true daughter to you.'

To which that lady replied, 'I am quite sure you will, my dear. And now I shall go and talk to the Admiral. I dare say you two are wishing me further.'

'Indeed, indeed we do not!' from Laura.

Mrs. Crewe went on, not heeding her, 'As it is market day, I will take Mercy with me into the village, and get something nice for dinner, in honour of this joyful occasion. I believe there are pheasants to be had sometimes at the general shop—poached, no doubt, but we need know nothing of that; and perhaps a brill, if the boats are in.'

'But, my dear mother, I have something more to tell you,' interrupted Denzil, 'which may not please you so much, though it is good news too,' and he proceeded to inform her of the proposal of his firm to despatch him to Japan, to bring matters there into order, and examine into the suspected malpractices of their agent, and of the various advantages he anticipated would spring therefrom.

At first Mrs. Crewe was irreconcilable, and even shed a few tears; but she gradually came round to her son's representations that a year and three or six months would be the extreme limit of their separation, and then he would really settle down into a stay-at-home 'land-lubber' for the rest of his life.

'So you said before, Denzil,' she exclaimed, 'so you said before, and now you are off again to the other side of the world. What does Laura say to your scheme?'

'That Denzil knows best,' she said. 'Yet I wish he had not to go.'

'It is for the best,' he said gravely, 'and the sooner the better: for every hour of delay will make our parting more painful.'

'When do you expect to know for certain the time you must leave?'

'My week's holiday will end on Monday; I expect to find the letters which will decide everything on Tuesday at the office. I must have a week to prepare, and hope to start with the mail after next—that is, in about a fortnight.'

'So soon?' cried his mother, while Laura silently pressed the hand that held hers, and the conversation was interrupted by the entrance of the Admiral, who gave his cordial assent to the proceedings, and plans and prospects were discussed with friendly frankness.

The few days that intervened before Denzil left them made themselves wings, and fled away with surprising speed. There was an indescribable mellow sweetness in the sober joy that per-

vaded them: a certainty in the lasting happiness of love so tender and considerate, so gradually matured into fullest development. In those days Denzil seemed to have suddenly grown one with her—to be friend, brother, lover, all, and more than all. How could she have ever even imagined happiness without him?

Then came a telegram from London, 'Letters as expected. Must sail on 27th. Will be with you on Thursday.'

This was followed all too quickly by a sudden hasty parting, which seemed to cost the mother more grief and tears than the *fiancée*, who was deeply touched and gratified by the strong feeling betrayed by Denzil in bidding her farewell.

The first few days after Denzil's departure seemed terribly desolate, dreary, and never-ending; but the week over, both Mrs. Crewe and Laura felt that the first notch in the tally of coming time was surmounted, and, though a trifle, was so much deducted from the total.

Finally the last letter sent ashore with the pilot reached them, and they felt really cut off from the wanderer.

Laura sought solace in earnest work; Mrs. Crewe was too used to these separations not to bear this one with resignation, while the bright future beyond supplied her with an endless source of conjecture and anticipatory arrangement.

She settled where Denzil was to live, the amount of rent he ought to pay, the servants they were to keep, and the parties they were to give. So the hours slipped by, and time, the healer, brought beauty and hope into their lives.

The time came quickly too when they must quit their sweet summer retreat.

Just before she was to leave the Dingle for Leamington Road, Laura had a long letter from Winifrid dated a week previously from Franzinsbad.

It was written in high spirits. All was well with her and hers. Lady Jervois and Sir Gilbert were with them; 'it was such a comfort to have dear Helen with her, particularly as Sir Gilbert was now obliged to have a proper attendant, and did not object to his wife joining in expeditions which cost him nothing. The walks and drives were lovely; the company most amusing; the band excellent; dear Baby blooming; and above all, Reginald was about to be rewarded for his goodness in giving up the partridges at Pierslynn, for a Graf with many consonants in his name had invited him to his place near Kaliez in Prussian Poland, where there were forests and game of every kind; so he (Reginald) would take advantage of the presence at Franzinsbad of his sister and

her husband to leave Winnie in their care. On his return they would bend their steps homeward, travelling by easy stages, and probably would reach London towards the end of October.'

This letter gave Laura sincere pleasure, and extracts from it formed a large item in the epistle she was compiling in time for the next mail, in order that Denzil should have home news as soon as possible after his arrival at his destination.

After all, it was cheerful, now that the grey autumnal days drew in so early, to return to the comfortable London home.

Mrs. Crewe was very busy indeed for some time, regulating and replacing everything in its original order.

'Do you know, Laura, I do not think Mrs. Ritson has been judicious in her treatment of Collins,' she would say during her many pauses for rest and conversation, when she would enter and sit down in the dining-room, duster in hand. 'I had to call her three times just now before she came, and then she said she did not hear because she had turned on the water tap, which is nonsense, and impertinent; I must really put her in her place again. I doubt, too, if she was as kind to Topsy as she pretends. Mrs. Ritson was greatly taken with the dear cat; but I suspect she did not owe much to Collins; I never saw anything like the delight of the darling beauty when she first saw me, the way she purred and rubbed her head against me was positively touching,' &c.

So they settled down into their old system of life. Laura soon found plenty of work, and watched with pride and pleasure the growth of a certain little hoard kept with jealous care. Somehow or other, whether it was that an assured future gave cheerful firmness to her manners, or settled happiness a bolder turn to thought and touch, success seemed to come at her call; so she waited patiently, though not without a certain dread, for the return of Reginald and his wife to London.

The Admiral, for some unexplained reason, was less occupied with the Christian Brethren and Mount Moriah than formerly. Mrs. Crewe accounted for this by supposing that the dear Admiral's natural good sense and knowledge of the higher class of society had at length surmounted his acquired fanaticism. Laura expressed no opinion, but suspected that her guardian was in some mysterious way short of funds; she was therefore doubly grateful to the Providence that had so shaped her course that she was now very nearly, if not quite, self-sustaining.

Herbert Fielden, who was working, as arranged by his brother, in an office previous to going out to join him in Bombay, was a frequent visitor during the months he was in London, and Laura

was surprised and pleased to find him companionable and not without observation.

They sometimes took a walk together of a fine Sunday, when he used to talk very confidentially. He had not forgotten his strong liking for Denzil, and their conversation often turned upon him; but, in accordance with her own and Denzil's wish, Mrs. Crewe had agreed to keep their engagement a secret until his return from Japan. Nevertheless the boy's *penchant* gave an interest to their intercourse and drew them together.

Herbert also in his confidential talk frequently let fall crumbs of information touching Madame Moscynski which surprised and disturbed his hearer. The fair Pole was a great favourite with the unsophisticated boy. 'Doesn't she ride and play cards! I can tell you she is more than a match for any of the men at Pierslynn. She was awfully kind to me—indeed I think she took rather a fancy to me—and taught me no end of games. She is a tremendous politician too, always plotting against Russia. Mrs. Piers is very fond of her; she was in great hopes of converting her to Protestantism this summer, only she was obliged to go abroad so suddenly.'

'Has she gone abroad?' cried Laura. 'Where?'

'I don't know. There was some plot on foot in Germany, I think; so she went to help it. She is an extraordinary woman.'

This conversation took place at the end of October, and about a fortnight after Herbert came in to tell his friends at Leamington Road that he had received an urgent summons from his brother, who had found a berth for him in the house of a friend, and to consult with the Admiral as to the preparations requisite for his start, money matters, &c.

Laura could see that the inability to contribute his share to Herbert's outfit was a keen mortification to the Admiral. 'I feel most severely that I trusted too much to my own strength, and rejected competent advice, when I embarked in that unfortunate Hungarian undertaking. Having assumed the place of guardian to you and your young cousins in a parental sense, I should have been more cautious; indeed mere mortal foresight is exceedingly imperfect, and the strange perversions of the human heart are not to be fathomed; still, to live in a constant state of doubt and suspicion is to neutralise all power of doing good.'

He sighed deeply, and gazed away towards the window with the painful, perplexed look that always touched Laura.

'Dearest guardian, if you would only think more of yourself, your own wants and rights, you would be better and happier; the

only living thing you are hard to is yourself. As for us, we are all well provided for now; do not trouble any more about us, it will now be our duty and happiness to take care of you.'

'Ay! how differently matters are arranged for us, compared with our own designs. But I feel at rest as concerns you, dear Laura, and believe your lot, if humble, will be a happy one. Winnie's is a more brilliant and a more trying position. I trust she knows where to find strength. Have you heard from her lately?'

'Not for more than a month. I suppose she is on her way home. I expect her next letter will say when we may expect to see her.'

The Admiral so far opened his heart to Laura after Herbert had left them, the evening that his immediate departure for India had been decided on.

As is sometimes the case after speculating about a letter, it arrives—the next morning brought a brief epistle from Winnie dated from Vienna.

From it Laura gathered that a previous letter must have gone astray, as, after some account of the baby, whom she did not think quite so well as he had been at Franzinsbad, she went on—'I am weary waiting for a letter from you; you know there is no one on earth I rely on like yourself. If you cease to care for me, what is left? and you may judge from my last how happy I have been since poor Helen left! Sir Gilbert is really wonderfully better—is it not strange how disagreeable, unnecessary people are spared, and sympathetic kind ones, like the dear father, are swept away? To think that it is little more than two years and a half since we were left desolate at Dresden! I seem to have lived through two lives!'

After a slight sketch of what she had seen in Vienna, she wrote, 'I find my German very useful. Some of the "Grandes Dames" whose husbands Reginald met in his hunting expeditions at Kaliez have called. They are amiable and civil, and delighted that I can speak with them in their own tongue. But I do not interest myself much in anything. I long to be back in England, and shall not soon leave it again. Baby must be a true English boy. I have no idea when we shall start on our homeward way—not for a week or ten days. Reginald is well amused, and has many Austrian friends. He has asked half the "curled darlings" of the Turf set here to Pierslynn for Christmas.

'Imagine how surprised and pleased we were to meet Colonel Bligh the other day in the Prater. He seemed like an old friend; he has been with us every day since, and is really quite a comfort to

me. Write to me at once, dearest Laura, that I may have your letter before I leave.'

This communication made Laura profoundly uneasy. Something had gone wrong; and all she could hope was that she should soon see the writer and have the satisfaction of a thoroughly confidential talk.

Meantime, she was very busy helping Herbert with his outfit and preparations, in which she received much assistance from Mrs. Crewe. She felt deeply parting with the bright good-humoured boy, whose youthful selfishness at least never wounded. He was one more link severed of the chain which bound her to the past. In another month a change still greater would probably take place—when she had revealed her knowledge to Reginald, then, indeed, 'all things would become new.'

#### CHAPTER XLIII.

HERBERT had gone. The dull and shortening days of November were gliding fast away. Laura's working hours were unavoidably restricted; yet the number of her pupils increased, and, but for her uneasiness respecting Winnie and the dread with which she anticipated her *dénouement* with Reginald, the sombre season would have been very happy, with peace in the present and hope in the future.

As it was, nothing could long cloud the lasting joy with which she looked forward to her union with Denzil, and she proved a most willing and sympathetic listener to Mrs. Crewe's various and rambling recollections of her son's childhood, youth, and adolescence.

Meanwhile Winnie did not write, and the only news Laura received of her was from the dowager Mrs. Piers, who came up to town for a few days' shopping and called upon Laura. She said her son and his wife had left Vienna and intended to return by Munich and Nuremberg to Paris, where they would probably make a short stay; that Winnie was a very bad correspondent, and that she (Mrs. Piers) feared her daughter-in-law was subject to nervous attacks, similar to what had almost cost her her life last spring.

'I am sure there could not be a more amiable, easily pleased creature than young Mrs. Piers during the months she passed in my house,' said Mrs. Crewe, who assisted in a stately manner at this interview. She had an unavowed antipathy to Mrs. Piers, and rather enjoyed contradicting her. 'Perfectly reasonable



and unselfish; and I must say it is not every man who has Mr. Piers' luck, and can pick up a pearl as soon as he throws away a diamond.'

'Really, dear Mrs. Crewe, you are quite poetical,' said Mrs. Piers, taking refuge in lofty coldness against this masked battery. 'Pray, Laura, do you know if Mrs. Trent is in town?'

'She was not when I called there about ten days ago, but was expected this week, I think.'

'I should like to have seen her before I leave. I am going to Westmoreland the day after to-morrow. Poor Sir Gilbert is far from well; he has fallen back a good deal since they left Franzinsbad. Helen is very anxious I should go to her.'

'Very natural,' said Mrs. Crewe, with an air of approbation that irritated Mrs. Piers. 'There can be no comforter in trouble like a mother.'

'Of course,' returned Mrs. Piers. 'Pray, Laura, how is your excellent guardian?'

Laura made a suitable reply, and then asked the date of Winnie's last letter to her mother-in-law.

'Oh, I have not heard from her since just after Helen left them; then she wrote a rather hasty, imprudent letter. But I am no mischief-maker, and I never intend to say a word about it to Reginald—poor fellow! he has his troubles—fair though his lot may seem. God forbid I should increase his irritation.'

Laura's heart beat high at these words. She longed to ask Mrs. Piers boldly if the letter touched on Madame Moscynski; but the dread of Mrs. Crewe's eager curiosity and endless comments held her back. She could not expose this spot upon Winnie's bright seeming of prosperity and success to the uncompromising investigation of such eyes as her future mother-in-law's.

'You surprise me,' she said quietly. 'Winnie used to be the best-tempered and least exacting of mortals, and always seemed to appreciate you sincerely. At this distance one cannot understand how things really are, or what misunderstandings may exist. I cannot believe that she wrote hastily to you without at least thinking she had good cause.'

'You are very loyal, Laura. I cannot enter into particulars now; but you would be surprised if I did; at any rate, I shall be as well pleased to be in the North when they pass through London. Indeed, I am very anxious about Sir Gilbert, and though his estate being entailed must go to that cousin of his, Captain Howard Jervois, there will be large savings for Sybil, and one never knows how so crotchety a man may dispose of them. He has made about four wills already, and may make four more. The Jervois' jointure

is miserably insufficient ; but most men think women can live upon air.'

'Exactly so,' remarked Mrs. Crewe, who was burning to know what *embrouillement* lay hidden under Mrs. Piers' mysterious hint. 'There is no better test of a man's principles and sense of justice than the way in which he disposes of his property.'

'No doubt,' returned Mrs. Piers, rising. 'I really must go,' as if they were making violent efforts to keep her. 'I have a hundred and one things to do before dinner. And you do not think there is any use in my going to call on the Trents? Good morning, Mrs. Crewe—good morning, Laura—my best regards to the Admiral,' &c., &c.

'Well, Laura, you may say what you like,' said Mrs. Crewe, with much decision, as that young lady returned from seeing Mrs. Piers to the door; 'but I consider it a downright misfortune to have such a mother-in-law. She is a disagreeable, conceited, cross-grained cat, and Winnie deserved a better fate than to fall into such hands. She will just make mischief between husband and wife. Tell me, my dear, what do you think she was driving at about the "hasty letter"? I hope Winnie gave it to her properly, for she has a spirit of her own. And to hear her speculating on her son-in-law's will before the breath is out of his body—it is really shocking! What do you think she meant, Laura?—I mean about the letter?'

'I cannot imagine; some trifle, I dare say. But I really thought Winnie was on very good terms with Mrs. Piers; she always seemed very nice towards her. I do not suppose there is much the matter.'

'I am not so sure,' said Mrs. Crewe, with a profound air. 'We all know that from small beginnings noble structures rise—I do not mean that exactly, but you know what I mean. Ah, my dear Laura, I am glad to think that you will have a very different mother-in-law and a very different husband, though he may not have a grand place and five thousand a year.'

'So am I, dear Mrs. Crewe,' said Laura, with a bright smile. 'Not that I believe Reginald is a bad husband—I am sure he adores Winnie; but I *shall* be glad to have a good long talk with her when she comes.'

'Ah, that shows me you do not think all is gold that glitters, in her case. I know life too well to be easily deceived. Well, well, time will show.'

Laura's uneasiness took larger and more indefinite proportions after this conversation. She feared she knew not what, yet all

her forebodings centred round the graceful image of Madame Moscynski. Where had she gone when she cut short her visit to Dairysford, and left her uncle's house without a mistress? What was the source of that mysterious allusion in Winnie's last letter, 'You may judge how happy I have been'? It would soon be three weeks since she had written, and still no reply. Every morning she came down hoping to find a foreign letter awaiting her on the breakfast table, and every morning she was disappointed. So she tried to persuade herself that no news was good news, and that if Winnie were in grief or difficulty she would infallibly turn to her early friend.

Thus a certain degree of assurance crept over her, and she waited with renewed patience the moment that was to explain all.

One afternoon in the last week of November, Laura had reached home after a long morning's work, having two classes in different schools to attend to on that day. It was dull and cold, and snow had begun to fall before she reached home. With a pleasant sense of labour accomplished and rest earned, Laura changed her dress and removed her damp boots, intending to allow herself an hour's congenial reading of an article on Art in the 'Fortnightly,' as soon as Mrs. Crewe would allow the lamp to be lit, until which time she had her knitting, for which she required hardly any light.

The dining-room was unoccupied when she entered, save by Topsy, who was sleeping in a favourite arm-chair; a good fire glowed and gleamed in the grate, contrasting pleasantly with the gloom and slow-falling snowflakes outside. The room, though neither richly nor abundantly furnished, had an air of comfort and refinement.

'I wonder where Mrs. Crewe is,' thought Laura, as she drew a low easy-chair near the fire, and looked round for her work-basket. She had come in with a latch-key, and had not seen any one; she had knocked at the Admiral's door, and receiving no answer concluded that he too was out. 'I hope he has his umbrella and *cache-nez*,' was her next reflection, as she walked to a table in the opposite corner where she desried her basket. 'He is not nearly so strong as he was last winter.'

As she put out her hand to take her work she noticed that a small card lay beside it, and on it were printed the words 'Colonel Courteney Bligh, Junior United Service Club.'

Laura stood still for a moment or two gazing at this morsel of pasteboard, lost in conjecture. What could have induced a man of his style, habits, ideas, to call upon her? She was utterly out of his line. Nothing short of a direct commission from Winnie

could have sent him so far from his usual haunts as Leamington Road.

Still holding the card, Laura took her knitting and returned to her chair. How vexed she was to have missed him! She was inclined to write him a note, asking if he had any special commission from Winnie, and appointing a time to receive him if he had. While she mused, Mrs. Crewe came in—Mrs. Crewe in one of her best caps, a lace fichu, and with her gold *châtelaine* at her side—certain indications that some one or something unusual was expected.

‘Oh! you have found the card, have you?’ she exclaimed as she entered. ‘Who is he, my dear? I never heard of him before.’

‘He is a friend of Reginald and Winnie’s—I have met him with them. I suppose he has some message for me.’

‘Collins says he is a “grand gentleman,” and came up in a hansom. I had gone round to the butcher. I must really leave those people, Laura—the leg of mutton this morning was quite two ounces short weight. I just begged them to remember that I have scales in my kitchen—and don’t you ever be without them, my dear, when you have one. What was I saying? Oh, yes—I had just gone round to the butcher’s, and when I came in I found Collins open-mouthed about this “grand gentleman,” as if she did not see the most perfect of gentlemen every day of her life. It must have been about one o’clock. He was dreadfully disappointed not to find you, and asked when you would be in, and when Collins said at three she thought, he said he would call about that time, as he wished particularly to see you. So I have put myself a little to rights, as I do not think it quite the thing for you to receive a man of that description by yourself.’

‘Thank you,’ said Laura, mechanically, while she ran over a wide range of possibilities in her mind as to the motive of this visit. She was startled and full of a fearful looking-for of evil, and while she pondered, and Mrs. Crewe swept to and fro, putting the chimney ornaments straight, brushing up the fireplace, &c., a loud ring set Laura’s heart beating; the next moment Collins opened the dining-room door, saying in an audible voice, ‘The gentleman for Miss Piers, ’m,’ calling forth an indignantly murmured ‘Ill-mannered creature’ from Mrs. Crewe; and Colonel Bligh entered with the indescribable ease and courteous bearing, at once simple and unassuming, which mark a man of the world accustomed to associate on terms of equality with men of all grades.

A tall, well-set-up man, with a somewhat soldierly carriage, an

aquiline nose, light-brown short crisp hair, and long red moustaches, light eyes of no special colour, watchful and variable in expression, but looking you honestly in the face.

A rough warm morning suit of incomparable fit, faultless gloves and boots, completed the figure that stood bowing before Laura.

'I am very sorry I was not at home when you called this morning, to save you the trouble of coming again,' said Laura, smiling and colouring slightly.

'It is no trouble to me,' returned Colonel Bligh, in a wonderfully soft voice for so big a man. 'I have stayed in town to-day expressly to see you.'

'Indeed! Let me introduce you to Mrs. Crewe.'

Another deep bow, and then Colonel Bligh took the seat indicated to him, and, glancing quickly at Mrs. Crewe, said in his usual quiet tone, 'I saw our friends in Paris yesterday, and I promised Mrs. Piers to see you.'

'Ah! how is she?' cried Laura, her eyes lighting up. 'She has not written for such a long time!'

'Why, that is her complaint against *you*! I told her I thought there was a mistake somewhere.'

'She has not written to me since they left Vienna.'

'That's strange,' said Colonel Bligh, looking straight into the fire. 'Then you do not know that the little fellow, the baby, is ill?'

'I had no idea of it.'

'How extraordinary!' exclaimed Mrs. Crewe, who had arranged herself imposingly in an arm-chair. 'I assure you, Colonel Bligh, young Mrs. Piers and Laura were always like sisters. Indeed, so long as she was in my house we were like one family, and a very happy family—though I say it.'

'No doubt,' said he, politely. 'I have often heard Mrs. Piers speak of her stay with you; and as to Miss Piers, it is a regular case of Orestes and Pylades, by Jove! Well, I am sorry to say the little fellow is *very* ill; I had not seen Mrs. Piers for two or three days, so yesterday I called to say good-bye. She came down and asked me to see you, and say she had written to beg you to come to her if you could, as she was so alone. You see a man is of little or no use in such a case. I do not think Mrs. Piers has any intimates in Paris—except, of course, Madame Moscynski.'

'Madame Moscynski!' repeated Laura, feeling stupefied with sudden sense of evil.

'Ah! Princess Moscynski,' said Mrs. Crewe, with an ineffable air. 'A very charming person.'

'Exceedingly charming,' returned Colonel Bligh, slightly elevating his eyebrows, 'but not exactly—a—sick nurse.'

'What!' cried Laura. 'Did Winnie want me to help her with the baby?'

'So I understood; and I think she was considerably cut up that you neither wrote nor came.'

'Came! Oh, I am ready to start now! Do tell me the truth—is Winnie very, very unhappy?'

'She is of course anxious and uneasy,' returned Colonel Bligh, with another glance at Mrs. Crewe, who had risen to ring the bell. Laura was silent, thinking 'He has more to tell me—but does not like to speak out.'

'Really, the negligence of servants is intolerable,' cried Mrs. Crewe; 'I must call to Collins to bring the lamp,' and she moved towards the door. Colonel Bligh started to his feet, first to open and then to close it carefully after her. Returning to the fireplace, he stood looking down into Laura's face with a keener look than she thought his face could assume, and pulling his long moustaches.

'I scarcely know the exact scope of my instructions,' he said after an instant's pause; 'but I think I may venture to say that if you really care about your cousin, now is the time to be with her—no one ever wanted help and sympathy more! Go to her at once, if you possibly can. When you reach Paris you will see how matters are, and your sense and tact—you see I have heard a good deal of you—may put them straight, if it is still to be done.'

'I will go at once,' said Laura, pressing her hand on her heart, yet speaking with grave composure. 'But, Colonel Bligh—ask me—suggest it before Mrs. Crewe solely on account of the baby.'

He bent his head, and before he could speak again Mrs. Crewe re-entered. 'We shall have light in a moment,' she said. 'Pray sit down, Colonel Bligh; do not run away so soon, you have not told us half the news.'

'Thank you, I have just ventured to urge Miss Piers to start as soon as possible. Mrs. Piers wrote last Friday, nearly a week ago, and is almost stupefied by disappointment at receiving no answer. The child is in a very critical state, and she is alone.'

'Certainly, I am sure dear Laura will go. The Admiral can have no objection. It is shocking weather for travelling. When the dear infant is better, it will be interesting to see Paris.'

'When can you start?' asked Colonel Bligh, who seemed restless, earnest, and altogether unlike the careless, jovial man-about-town Laura took him for.

'It is nearly four o'clock,' she said, rising to look at the

pendule as Collins entered with the lamp. 'There is an evening train, is there not, by Folkestone and Boulogne?'

'The tidal train leaves Charing Cross at eight-thirty this evening,' returned Colonel Bligh with suspicious readiness, 'and allowing for stoppages you will reach Paris about nine to-morrow morning.'

'This evening!' almost screamed Mrs. Crewe. 'It is impossible. You cannot pack up in the time; and that tiresome woman has not sent home your new winter dress; and no one to see you off, or to escort you. Excuse me, Colonel Bligh—but this dear girl is *especially* under my care. I could not let her travel alone.'

'Dear Mrs. Crewe, there is no help for it. I must go—I will start by the tidal train this evening, Colonel Bligh.'

'If you will allow me, I will be at the station to see you off, and put you in charge of the guard. There is really nothing to fear from such a journey, Mrs. Crewe. Ladies' cabins and compartments, all the way through. Examination of baggage a mere farce, especially at this season. Here is the address. Piers has put up at a private hotel not known to the general horde of English travellers—Hôtel St. R——, Rue des Pyramides; but I will give you full directions when we meet this evening.'

'Thank you very much.'

'But Laura, my dear, I cannot——'

'I will leave this house at seven to insure being in good time,' continued Laura, laying her hand kindly, but imperatively, on Mrs. Crewe's.

'You really are a trump,' cried Colonel Bligh. 'I told her you would come, though I felt by no means sure.'

'How could she doubt me?' said Laura.

'Your silence,' began the Colonel; then interrupting himself, 'but I will not stay to prevent your preparations. You will find me waiting you at Charing Cross somewhere about eight to eight-fifteen.'

'Will you telegraph to Winnie that I am coming?' asked Laura.

'Telegraph?'—a moment's hesitation—'yes, yes, of course I'll telegraph. And now I will wish you good morning. Do not be uneasy, Mrs. Crewe; I assure you there is no difficulty whatever on so much-travelled a route. I would offer to escort Miss Piers myself if I thought there was.'

'I have not the slightest hesitation about travelling alone.'

'We must abide by what the Admiral says,' added Mrs. Crewe.

'Goodbye, then, for the present.'

‘Good morning, Colonel Bligh.’

‘Gracious goodness, Laura!’ exclaimed Mrs. Crewe the instant they were alone. ‘This is really a wild-goose chase. I am sure no one feels more for poor dear Winnie than I do, for I well know what it is to lose a precious infant, though I am thankful now to think they are safe from the miseries of this wicked world. But she has her husband, and a first-rate nurse, and everything money can buy. Why she wants to race you off in the snow and cold and wretchedness of a bad November I cannot understand—just the selfishness of prosperity. She never sends for you except when she is in trouble, never for pleasure or company.’

‘Dearest Mrs. Crewe,’ interrupted Laura, who had seated herself at that lady’s devonport and was scribbling rapidly, ‘what money have you in the house—can you spare me three pounds?’

‘Yes. I can do that much. But how do you think Denzil will like your gallivanting off in this—this wild manner? Really, Laura, you ought to consider—’

‘I have no fear of Denzil’s disapprobation. He would be the first to start me off. Will you kindly see to these notes being posted, and—’

‘Oh yes, of course. Really the headstrong self-will of young people is amazing—you do not pay the smallest attention to my remonstrances; you have just lost your head, Laura. And what will you travel in? Your waterproof is quite shabby, and your winter jacket a last year’s concern, and to go among these grand high-flying people in your old things shows, I think, a little want of proper spirit.’

‘Dear kind friend,’ cried Laura, starting up and throwing her arms round her, ‘do not contradict me; my whole heart is bent on this journey, and when I return I shall have so much to tell you.’

‘Well, well,’ returned Mrs. Crewe, always mollified by a hug and a kiss, ‘I am a fool about you, Laura, you do what you like with me. Be sure you wrap up well. To think of your being out on the stormy sea all alone in the dark; and as ill luck will have it I have not a morsel of anything in the house to make sandwiches of. I will send Collins out for half a pound of ham this moment.’

Mrs. Crewe hastened in search of Collins, and thenceforward became most active in furthering Laura’s preparations, albeit complaining all the time.

About five the Admiral came in, and Laura ran up to his room to explain matters. He was a good deal exercised by this sudden change of front, and like Mrs. Crewe raised many objections



to Laura's travelling alone. But something in her ardent resolution, the controlled eagerness, the tender haste which pervaded her manner, carried him away also; and a little past seven o'clock she found herself ready for the road, her portmanteau packed, her travelling bag replenished, and her purse sufficiently fortified, while Collins stood in her bonnet and shawl, as she had come from fetching a cab, at the front door.

The Admiral had almost put on his coat to accompany his ward to the station, but she dissuaded him eagerly. Reginald's friend, Colonel Bligh, had promised to meet her and do all that was needful; the Admiral need not run the risk of taking cold while waiting for an omnibus, nor the expense of a cab to return.

She was feverishly anxious to have a few uninterrupted words with Colonel Bligh, who impressed her as knowing more than he liked to say. But at last she was off, escaped from the Admiral's last injunctions, from Mrs. Crewe's voluminous embrace.

She was not nervous or cast down, rather strung to courage and composure; she felt in some impressive, unreasoning way that the moment of action was close at hand, and that all uncertainty would soon be at an end. If only she could spare Winnie some suffering, if she could save Reginald's reputation!

Lost in active thought, the long drive from Westbourne Park to Charing Cross seemed quickly accomplished, and it was with a sense of comfort and protection she recognised Colonel Bligh standing among the porters at the entrance of the station.

'You are quite up to time, Miss Piers,' he exclaimed, as he handed her out and gave her luggage to an already subsidised porter. 'We will get your ticket and see the luggage weighed, then I shall have a few minutes to speak to you.'

This accomplished he led Laura to a remote sofa in the general waiting-room. 'I am greatly relieved to see you fairly on your way to Mrs. Piers,' he said; 'she wants you terribly. By the way, I did *not* telegraph.'

'Why?' asked Laura, with an odd feeling that she knew he would not.

'Oh, well, I had my reasons. It would not hasten your arrival, and she will perhaps be less disturbed. But tell me, do you *know* Madame Moscynski?'

'Very little.'

'Do you admire her?'

'No. I have a curious feeling of unreasonable repugnance to her.'

'Ha! Then I suppose she will not bamboozle you, and I need not be afraid to say that she is the devil's own *intrigante*. In

short, I do not understand her myself. I am not straight-laced, but there are certain things I cannot swallow. You will judge for yourself, however; and—and—I say—Miss Piers, would you mind writing me a line?—to the club, you know—just to say how you find Mrs. Piers is going on. I saw a good deal of her at Vienna, and, by Jove! she is an angel!—I never met a woman like her. You will not mind sending me word if the little fellow pulled through?’

‘I will write to you if you wish,’ returned Laura, unhesitatingly; ‘but I hope you will see us all soon in London.’

‘So do I. I wish Piers had some friend who could just put him straight, or say a “word in season,” as the parsons call it.’

‘Could *you* not offer him the advice you think he needs?’ said Laura, looking curiously at him.

‘Who? Me? No, by Jove! I am the last person he would listen to; but——’

‘Now then for the Folkestone train!’ cried a porter, putting his head into the waiting-room.

‘Give me your bag, Miss Piers; will you not have a glass of sherry? Get you one in a moment, lots of time.’

Laura declined. So Colonel Bligh placed her carefully in the carriage, seeing that the foot-warmer *was* warm, that her shawls and wraps were comfortably arranged, and then held a private conference with the guard, who came to the carriage and promised most emphatically to ‘look after the young lady.’ Then the whistle sounded, Colonel Bligh shook Laura’s hand cordially and said ‘You will be sure to write,’ stepped back and raised his hat, as the train moved out of the station at rapidly increasing speed, dashing away into darkness and the unknown future.

Busy thought and the patience of a strong spirit rendered the journey less tedious and fatiguing than she expected; the diminished number of passengers at that untoward season made the few difficulties of the well-worn route less difficult. At last, in the dim cold light of a drizzling morning, Laura found herself at the Gare du Nord, somewhat puzzled and stunned by the vociferations of guards, *douaniers*, porters, and *cochers*, in a tongue which, however well known grammatically, was orally unfamiliar.

#### CHAPTER XLIV.

LONDON is not so much spoiled by gloom, damp, and drizzle as Paris. To the beautiful *riant* capital of ‘la belle France’ sunshine is essential, and bad weather mars her loveliness, as a fit

of the sulks or a burst of shrewish temper spoils the fair face of a pretty woman; whereas London, throbbing with the strong pulse of business life, sombre, mighty, loses little of its characteristics in an 'even downpour,' a shroud of fog, or a shower of sleet.

Paris had been to Laura, as it is to most vivid imaginations, the object of many a day-dream. To see that queen of cities, to wander through her galleries and museums, to visit the various scenes of the mighty drama enacted there nearly a hundred years ago, when the new era then inaugurated was brought forth in the desperate throes of more than one generation and baptised with fire and blood, had long been a cherished desire; and here she was driving over the wet slippery asphalt pavement, scarcely conscious that she was in the famous city, so absorbed was she by the idea that in a few minutes more she should see Winifrid, her pupil of early days, her *protégée*, her friend, her rival, her always earnestly loved Winnie. In what plight should she find her? and how should she be received by Reginald?

The way seemed endless, and she felt faint with apprehension and excitement when the *fiacre* drew up at the entrance of an hotel near the Tuileries Gardens.

The establishment was *en papillotes* at that early hour; two *garçons* in their shirt-sleeves were sweeping the entrance hall and stairs, a lady in a dressing-gown was looking through a huge account-book in the bureau, and a newsboy with a huge bundle of papers under his arm was talking to a stout man of imposing appearance who had not yet found time to shave. This last personage approached the *fiacre* as it stopped opposite the entrance, and in answer to Laura's questions replied, 'Yes, Mr. and Mrs. Piers and suite were in the house; but they were not yet visible; indeed he feared Mrs. Piers could not see any one. A great misfortune had just happened, the poor little baby died the night before last, and madame was inconsolable.'

'The baby dead!' cried Laura, overpowered by this news. 'This is terrible! Tell Farrar, tell Mrs. Piers' maid that I am here, and let me have a room as near Mrs. Piers as possible.' She gave the head-waiter, as this personage proved to be, a card with which she had provided herself.

'Ah! *Mees* Piers,' said the man, reading her name. 'Oh! pardon, mademoiselle, *par ici*, this way, mademoiselle,' and he led her up more than one flight of stairs to a rather dingy but well-furnished bedroom. 'I will call the *femme de chambre*, and have a fire lit. What will mademoiselle take for breakfast?'

'Thank you. I must see Farrar before anything.'

'I will send for her at once; she is not yet up.'

While he went away Laura removed her hat and cloak, and gazed with tear-dimmed eyes at the *femme de chambre* lighting up the fire.

The poor dear little baby dead! The tender life but scarce begun so soon cut short! What a blow to Winifrid! Surely such a grief would draw Reginald closer to the bereaved young mother! She waited with infinite impatience until the lady's-maid should make her appearance, and noted in a vague, half-unconscious way the foreign look of the room and its furniture, the heavy velvet-covered sofa and fauteuils, the lace curtains hung close against the glass of the windows, the tall vases and pendule on the mantel-shelf which almost obscured the looking-glass, the stiff, uninhabited aspect of the apartment. All sense of personal strangeness and isolation were swallowed up in her profound compassion for Winnie.

At last the door opened to admit the maid. 'Oh, Farrar!' cried Laura, running to her, and taking her hand. Then she stopped and could not bring out another word.

'Indeed, Miss Piers, I *am* glad you have come; my poor dear mistress did so watch for you. Ah, she is quite broken-hearted! She just sat like a statue all yesterday, we could hardly get the dead baby out of her arms. I persuaded her to go to bed last night after Mr. Piers left her. Now she is sleeping at last, and I must not wake her; but it *will* be a comfort to her to find you here.'

'Oh no, do not disturb her. I am so terribly grieved for her and the poor dear little baby.'

'And he had grown such a fine fellow, such a beauty! Ah, Miss Piers, it is not for me to speak, but we have been all wrong since that—that Madame Moscynski turned up at Franzinsbad. I never could abide her, and Nurse, she thinks no one ever was so grand and good, and what not; but she is rather an ignorant woman is Nurse. You must have some breakfast, ma'am. I ought to have thought of it before, after such a journey too.'

'I do not feel as if I could eat, but get me a cup of coffee and a morsel of bread while I wait.'

'Yes, ma'am, I will see to it. Oh, how I wish you had been with my poor mistress when baby began to get bad!'

'There was some mistake about the letter,' began Laura, but a sudden fit of caution seized her and she stopped, some unaccountable divination suggested silence as to Colonel Bligh's intervention.

'Then you did not get it in time?' said Farrar, pausing at the door, with a somewhat anxious look in her face.

'No, or I should have been here before.'

'That is odd,' said Farrar, and left the room.

While making a hasty toilette, drinking her coffee, and striving to swallow a mouthful or two, Laura thought intensely. She felt instinctively there was a delicate and difficult task before her; that she must be firm and cautious, but fearless. Farrar's words suggested mischief, all the more threatening for its vagueness.

But Farrar soon returned. 'Yes, 'm,' she cried, 'Mrs. Piers is awake, and is just all of a tremble with pleasure at hearing you have arrived; do come, 'm!'

Laura started up, and the next moment crossed the threshold of her cousin's room.

Winnie stood in the middle of it, wrapped in a long dressing-gown of white cashmere and lace, her abundant nut-brown hair all disordered and hanging loose, deadly pale, her large blue eyes dilated with a strange strained, almost stern look, inexpressibly painful to Laura, who, by one of those curious fantasies of memory, was carried back by Winnie's dress and attitude to a morning years past, when she was the sunny darling, the spoilt pet of the house, the wilful, generous, whimsical, tender dictator of the family—she had come to show her first dressing-gown to her mother, and, to prove that it was not too long, had drawn herself up with dramatic dignity. The contrast of the 'now' and 'then' was too painful, Laura's heart swelled with unspeakable compassion. 'Winnie, dear, dear Winnie!' was all she could say, as she threw her arms round her.

Winifrid was very still; she slowly raised her hands and clasped them round Laura's neck, resting her head on her shoulder. 'You could not come before?' she said with a deep sigh.

Glancing round to assure herself that they were alone, Laura exclaimed, 'I never had your letter, Winnie—never knew anything of your sore trouble till yesterday, when Colonel Bligh called. I came as quickly as I could.'

'I knew he would not fail me, nor you either,' she paused, and Laura felt her clasp tighten and her heart beat vehemently. 'What shall I do, Laura? What shall I do? I have nothing left.'

'How do you mean, dearest? Yes, of course, you feel desolate now; but in time you will gather strength. Time will bring consolation.'

'You do not know—you cannot know,' resumed the poor young mother. 'Ah, Laura, he was so sweet! he began to know me so well; and he had Reginald's eyes—the Reginald I used to love and that loved me!'

'And does love you,' said Laura, looking down anxiously into the poor dry, strained eyes, feeling alarmed by her feverishness.

'Lie down again, dear Winnie, and I will watch by you. You are worn out, you scarce know what you are saying; a few hours' sleep would do you so much good.'

'Sleep! I never thought I should sleep again, but I did; I have only just woke up, and everything seems worse. I do not want to sleep, or rather, I wish I might never wake. But come and see the last of my poor little baby,' and letting Laura go she opened a door which led into the child's room.

He lay so softly fair, in the satin-lined coffin, that but for the pallor of the still rounded cheek, he might have been in the profound sleep of infancy.

Laura's eyes welled over as she gazed at the little marble face so happy in its expression of intense repose. 'It is my last look,' said the mother, still tearless, with a strange, composed voice. 'The people will soon be here to take him away—away for ever! they take away the dead so soon here.'

'Oh, Winnie, dear Winnie,' cried Laura again, clasping her in her arms, 'it is terrible to see you like this! If our good kind mother could look upon you now, how heart-broken she would be! she loved you so much.'

Something in the allusion touched a tenderer chord than had yet been struck. Winifrid shivered all through her frame, her bosom heaved with a mighty sob, and then the blessed tears forced their way in a thunder-shower as she burst into an agony of weeping, trembling so violently that Laura was frightened, and half led, half supported her into her own room. Then when the first force of this torrent of grief passed over, she persuaded her to lie down again, promising to watch over her while she slept, and ran for Farrar to assist her mistress.

When the long agony of weeping had subsided, and Laura thought the mourner had dropped off to sleep, she said softly to Farrar, 'Where is Mr. Piers?' Winifrid turned immediately.

'He is not up yet, I think,' she said; 'he has not been well; ' then she closed her eyes, and lay quite motionless, and to all appearance sleeping, but from time to time a quivering sigh heaved her bosom; at last that too ceased, her features relaxed, and real sleep stole over her.

Laura still kept watch, very weary, and feeling sure there was much more to hear. The sort of speechless despair in Winifrid's face when she first saw her made a profound impression on her loving friend. And where was Reginald? Surely it must be a very serious illness that could keep him from his wife's side at such a time! True, there was the funeral of his little son—that must have taken him away.

How would he greet her? She had an instinctive presentiment he would not be pleased at her coming. But that was nothing to her, she knew; she felt her mission was to protect Winnie, to bind up whatever link was broken between the husband and wife. Thinking thus, round and round the same circle, Laura leaned back in the deep low chair by Winnie's bed, and for a time lost consciousness.

She was roused by Winnie turning restlessly and murmuring in her sleep; then she called 'Laura' sharply, and woke up suddenly completely: 'What o'clock is it, dear Laura?'

'A few minutes past eleven.'

'Ah! then he is quite gone! If I had not slept I might have had one more look at that sweet little face. But he was to have been taken away at half past nine; do ring for Farrar, she will tell; a fresh burst of tears, this time gentler and quieter, interrupted her.

'Ah, Farrar!' she exclaimed, as her maid came in, 'have they taken him away?'

'Yes, ma'am, nearly an hour ago,' replied Farrar, soothingly.

'Then it is indeed all over!' cried Winifrid, burying her face in the pillow, while convulsive sobs shook her frame. Farrar brought eau-de-cologne and water and bathed her temples, and tried to administer consolation of the ordinary kind. At last her mistress said hastily, 'Thank you, Farrar, you are very kind, you may go now;' then as she left the room she again stretched out her hand for Laura's; 'you will stay with me,' she whispered, 'until we go back to England, at all events; you are my only friend—I lost everything when I lost my boy.'

'Your husband, dearest, is still left to you, and you must comfort him.'

'My husband—oh yes, my husband! I do not forget him,' she returned with a deep sigh, and remained long silent and motionless; then again rousing herself she suddenly began on a subject so far removed from the present that Laura was startled. 'Do you remember my birthday, my last birthday at the dear old Rectory?—how we had luncheon in the woods, and my mother gave all the school-children tea in the servants' hall? Poor mother, it was the last birthday she was with me! Herbert slipped into the mere, and Reginald pulled him out. I do not seem to have any clear recollection of Reginald before that day, although I know he used to be with us every summer. But *that* day I thought him so disagreeable; he teased so much about my importance, and seemed to mock at our little *fête*, and twice he sent me off, as I considered,

rudely, because he was talking gravely to *you*. Do you remember it all, Laura?’

‘Yes, how well I remember it,’ said Laura, her eyes filling with tears.

‘And now,’ began Winifrid, then paused expressively, resuming in a strange rambling way her reminiscences of her girlish days, every now and then breaking off to describe the charm and promise of her poor lost baby, Laura answering in monosyllables, or by a silent caress, and beginning to feel faint and weary. At length Farrar made her appearance, bearing a tray with some food and wine for her mistress.

‘Mrs. Piers has not tasted anything since early yesterday morning, when Mr. Piers insisted on her swallowing some wine and biscuit. Do try and persuade her to eat a bit, ma’am; and you must be quite exhausted yourself. Luncheon, breakfast as they call it here, is quite ready. Miss Piers must have some refreshment, mustn’t she, ma’am?’

‘Oh yes, yes; I am so selfish in my grief, I did not think of you, and the long journey you have taken for me, dear, dear Laura. Go and eat; if you will, I will try too.’

‘Very well, then, I agree to go on that condition.’

‘Farrar, show Miss Piers the *salle à manger*.’

‘I was thankful to see my poor lady shedding tears at last,’ said Farrar, who was a somewhat old-fashioned type of Abigail, simple and kindly; ‘she has had enough to break her heart,’ she added in a significant tone, which Laura perceived, but would not notice, as she followed Farrar into a small dining-room at the farther end of a long corridor. ‘Yes, they have laid for two,’ said Farrar, as she opened the door. ‘Now do, miss, eat something and take a glass of wine; the bell is here by the big chair, if you want anything; for I must go back to my poor mistress, and stay by her; she is not fit to be left alone.’

‘Do so, Farrar. When will Mr. Piers be back?’

‘He will not be long now, ma’am.’

As soon as she was gone, Laura sat down and tried to eat; she had scarcely made her way through the wing of a chicken, and a glass of Macon, always listening for Reginald, when a door which led into the *salon* opened very gently, and Madame Moscynski, in outdoor dress, walked quietly into the room with the air of being at home.

The door was opposite Laura as she sat at table, and before the Polish princess could veil her countenance in polite blankness, Laura caught a quickly controlled flash of utter angry surprise in her pale face and peculiar eyes.



Madame Moscynski was the first to speak, as she advanced to the table and rested her hand on the back of a chair.

'Miss Piers! I had no idea you had arrived! How glad I am to see you; what a comfort you will be to that sweet suffering bereaved young mother. She had almost despaired of you.'

'I fear she had,' said Laura, rising courteously, but feeling on guard at all points.

'Do not let me disturb you,' said Madame Moscynski, softly. 'Indeed, I will join you; I promised to be with Mrs. Piers during the last agony when the poor little baby was taken away, and to receive the sorrowing father when he returned from the funeral, so he will expect to find me. Mrs. Piers was sleeping when I came, and continues to sleep, I am glad to hear. I suppose the letter to you was delayed or went astray?' and Madame Moscynski drew over a mayonnaise and helped herself.

'I suppose so,' returned Laura, guardedly; 'but the moment I knew my cousin wished for me, I set out.'

'I always said you would,' said Madame Moscynski, with a soft approving smile, 'only the delay puzzled us; ' she paused, and her lips parted again as if to speak, but she closed them resolutely: it would not do to ask point-blank how the intelligence reached her interlocutor. 'Poor dear Mrs. Piers—the dowager, I mean—she will be dreadfully grieved when she gets my letter—I wrote yesterday at Mr. Piers' request; she was quite wrapped up in her little grandson. You must be very tired after your rapid journey—at night, too.'

Laura said she did begin to feel a little weary, looking while she spoke with a dim wondering sense of distrust yet of admiration at the elegant figure and interesting though rather inscrutable face opposite to her, comparing her own ordinary travelling dress and almost homely aspect to the *recherché* elegance of Madame Moscynski's winter costume, and wondering if this gentle, courteous woman could be the unprincipled *intrigante* Winnie believed her to be. But as she looked and thought, the doubt resolved itself into certainty—yes, there was a something undefinable and repellent in the covert watchfulness of those sleepy eyes, in the hardness of the well-cut mouth, when not curved into the sweetness of her conventional smile. Was it possible that she was taking advantage of this terrible time, when Winnie, prostrated with grief, was incapable of resistance, to force herself into an appearance of intimacy? 'I must be cautious,' thought Laura, 'and not commit myself on either hand. Winifrid will speak to me ere long.'

'I must see if Mrs. Piers still sleeps,' she said at length, taking advantage of a pause in the easy flow of Madame Moscynski's talk,

as she gave a sketch of the baby's illness and death, in which, without asserting anything, she conveyed the idea of having been the stay and comforter of both parents, 'and if she does, I must take that opportunity to make my toilette, a matter of necessity after a night journey. Shall I tell Mrs. Piers you are here?'

'No, thank you, I spoke to nurse, who had just come downstairs from having a little sleep. She was greatly exhausted by the long watch, poor woman; she loved her little nurseling so much. She will let Mrs. Piers know.'

Before she could finish her sentence the door by which Laura had entered the *salle à manger* opened hastily, noisily, and Reginald stood in the doorway, looking from one to the other with an air half surprised, half amused.

At sight of him Laura's heart beat, and her colour rose; she went forward to greet him, and he met her half-way.

'Ah, Laura! What a good soul you are to come all this way just to please Winnie! I always said you were A 1—didn't I?' with a little familiar nod to the Princess. 'This is a melancholy ending to the poor little boy,' he went on. 'Winnie is awfully cut up; still, she need not have imposed such a journey upon you! She will be going back to London in a few days, and you could have seen as much as you like of each other.'

'But you know I do not count the cost when I can do anything for Winnie,' said Laura; 'she has no friend so near as myself. I only wish her letter had reached me in time.'

'Well, you have done her good already,' said Reginald, as he threw aside a loose overcoat, and, sitting down, poured himself out a large glass of sherry. 'I have just been in to see her, and tell her that everything had been as well done as we could manage. She had a good cry, and with all Madame Moscynski's kind care we never could strike the source of her tears before. I do not know what we should have done without Madame la Princesse!'

'You make too much of my poor efforts,' she returned, with a curious upward look at him. 'Would it not be well to warn Miss Piers that your poor dear wife's nerves have received such a shock, she sometimes shows symptoms of mental alienation!—very slight, and no doubt temporary, but the usual marks of "reason tottering on her throne," distrust of and aversion to her best friends, those whose society was previously most acceptable, myself for instance—you would scarcely believe it, she has suddenly evinced the strongest aversion to me.'

'This is terrible!' exclaimed Laura, with unmistakable alarm, and looking very straight at Reginald.

'Oh, you need not take fright,' he returned, 'in an odd, indif-

ferent sort of manner; 'she will come round and be herself again; but in the meantime she will no doubt tell you awful tales, though you are such a rock of sense, Laura, you will understand how to deal with her.'

'There can be little difficulty in doing so, we both know every light and shade in her character,' said Laura, who was greatly impressed by the change in Reginald. He was looking ill, pale, languid, with haggard eyes, a tinge of something like mockery in his pleasant smile, and a carelessness in his manner widely different from his former genial alertness. There was more of an effort than usual in his politeness to herself, and she felt keenly that she was far from a welcome guest, that there was mischief below the surface to which she had as yet no clue. 'Characters change a good deal with circumstances,' Reginald was saying while these observations suggested themselves to Laura. 'I assure you,' he continued, addressing Madame Moscynski, 'I consider Laura's friendship for my wife a sort of triumphant refutation of all that wiseacres have said about the fleeting nature of feminine attachments—they are quite devoted to each other. How much of it is due to a certain aptitude for dominating on one side, and accepting domination on the other, is beyond me to calculate.'

'That must be the result of habit,' said Madame Moscynski. 'Mrs. Piers never gave me the idea of being ready to accept domination.'

'I am, then, the dominating power in our association?' said Laura, with a grave smile. 'That is a new position for me.'

'You are much stronger than Winnie, and "behave as sich,"' said Reginald, carelessly, pushing away his plate and again filling his glass. 'But now that you are here, Laura, it will be very nice for her to have your company on her journey back. She was quite wild to go to England before the poor baby was taken ill. It has been all deucedly unfortunate, the loss of the little fellow has half turned her head—indeed, I am awfully cut up myself! Still, it will not do for me to sit down and weep.'

'I cannot stay long, as you know,' said Laura, startled by the possibilities shadowed forth in this speech; 'and when she has *you* she can hardly want me.'

'I know, I know,' said Reginald, impatiently. 'But I have an engagement to visit a famous racing establishment near Presburg, where I have a chance of picking up some wonderful additions to the Pierslynn stud; so there is no use in my going over to England merely to come back again. I can do Winnie no good,

and when we meet she will be better, and more inclined to attend to her husband than to nurse her grief.'

Laura had opened her lips to make an indignant reply, feeling alarmed and hurt by the tone of this speech, when a glimpse of a curious look in Madame Moscynski's eyes, as though she were watching for what would come next, made her pause and say simply, 'I am always glad to be of use to Winnie—or to you—and, as she is awake, I will go to her now.'

She rose and left the room as she spoke, but, closing the door hastily, caught her dress in it. Opening it to free herself, the words 'surprised' from Madame Moscynski and 'infernally' from Reginald caught her ear.

Was *she* the infernal nuisance? That was little matter; this intention to let Winnie return to England alone was a symptom of estrangement that thoroughly alarmed her; so did Madame Moscynski's subtle hint respecting temporary alienation of mind, one of those poison drops which might work incalculable evil. Laura thrilled for a moment with the idea that even she herself might have been put on a wrong scent had it not been for Winnie's revelations in London. Now she was forearmed, and resolved not to let Reginald leave his wife without some attempt to open his eyes to the selfish indifference of his conduct. 'How changed he is! how ill he looks!' she thought as she paused at Winifrid's door. 'Things are not as they should be; but I must be cautious, and wait till Winnie speaks before I attempt to interfere.'

(To be continued.)

## Roundel.

*(From the French of Charles of Orleans.)*

'Alez-vous-en, alez, alez !'

Be off with you, be off, I say,  
 Worry and Dumps, and you, Sir Care !  
 Think you the upper hand to bear  
 Of me for ever and a day ?

That will you not ! By yea and nay,  
 Good Sense of you shall clear the stair !  
 Be off with you, be off, I say,  
 Worry and Dumps, and you, Sir Care !

And if again you come this way,  
 You and your crew, then Heaven, I swear,  
 A malison for you shall spare,  
 And whomsoever you obey.  
 Be off with you, be off, I say !

W. E. HENLEY.

# BELGRAVIA.

APRIL 1883.

## Maid of Athens.

BY JUSTIN MCCARTHY, M.P.

### CHAPTER X.

'YOU HAVE HURT HIM, SIR, IN THE SHOULDER.'

THE words of Bardolph to Sir John Falstaff, which I prefix to this chapter, might have been addressed with perfect accuracy to Mr. Pollen. He had hurt his adversary, myself, in the shoulder; but it was a more genuine hurt than I fancy Sir John had managed to inflict. It did me no particular harm, I may say at once; except that I suffered a great deal of pain in the jolting home from Marathon, where a carriage had been brought all the way from Athens to fetch me, and that I was more or less of an invalid for a little time after the bullet had been comfortably extracted. Mr. Vlachos and his servant were those who were seen pricking over the plain just too late to prevent the battle, as was their benevolent purpose. Mr. Pollen, it seemed, had really acted very handsomely. He had gone to Mr. Vlachos the night before our encounter and made him a very full apology. So far as Vlachos was concerned, there was nothing more to be said; and Vlachos at first assumed that the whole thing was over. But somehow or other he got a hint—I cannot but think the faithfully unfaithful Aristoboulos must have been at the bottom of it—and he contrived to find out where we had gone; and he mounted his horse before daybreak and galloped all the long rough way with the energy of a youth in the hope to overtake and interrupt us. The surgeons came soon after; but MacMurchad had no faith in Athenian surgery, and he decided very wisely that there was nothing to be done for me more than anybody could do until we got back to Athens. So I was lifted by the sinewy Palikars and carried to a shepherd's hovel a little way off, and wrapped in cloaks and laid upon straw there, and there I spent some eight or ten hours in the companion-

ship of MacMurchad, Vlachos, the shepherd and his wife, a goat, a ram, a dog, and some restless fowls.

I was laid up in Athens for about three weeks, and had to carry my arm—luckily it was the left arm—in a sling for months after. The bullet had splintered some of the bone, but there was no great harm done. I did not find the imprisonment very hard to bear, for, like other men who have led an active life and are unwilling to grant themselves much rest, I can enjoy idleness well enough when it is compulsory. The most disagreeable memories I have of the whole business are of the agony I suffered in the jolting home from Marathon and of the occasional bouts of tormenting thirst which used to distract me during my convalescence. If there was any feverishness in me after the extracting of the bullet, I think I drank myself out of it, as Lord Derby said of England and the Alabama damages; for the vast quantities of iced water, soda water, seltzer, lemonade, and, when I began to get better, Bass's ale swallowed by me, made the Greek waiters regard me as a miracle of absorption.

I have a curious sensation of forgetfulness about the first and the worst days of my confinement. They passed in a languid, dreamy, painless way. It was not during those days that I suffered much from thirst; that came later. I lay still and dreamed the time away; not always asleep or half-asleep, but dreaming. I was haunted by one continual presence, which ceased to be with me when I began to grow better. This was the presence of a face, a woman's face.

The Parthenon, as every one knows, has been consecrated, in its time, to other worship than that of the virgin goddess who specially protected Athens. It was a Christian church, devoted to the Virgin Mary, for even a longer stretch of time than that which saw it given over to the patronage of the Pallas Athene who miraculously raised up the olive on the Acropolis. From being the temple of the Virgin Mary it passed into the ruthless and desecrating hands of the clumsy Turks. During its time of occupation as a Christian church, many frescoes symbolical of the mysteries of the Christian faith had adorned its inner walls. One can still trace some remains of them in their outlines and their colours. One sweet Madonna face could faintly be seen in almost a completeness of outline. Much of the colouring was gone, and even the features were here and there so indistinct that fancy had to fill in the picture for herself; and for that very reason perhaps the face seemed all the more beautiful. It may have been poor enough as a work of art in its day; I know nothing on that point; but as the half-vanished face now smiles compassionately at you it

seems to be lighted with ideal sanctity and tender love and sadness. At one time I used to spend many moments of every day gazing on that face. I did not care to show it to the ordinary visitor. He or she was sure either not to be able to 'make it out;' not to be able to see any face there at all; to ask you, 'Oh, do you really think you see the outline of a face in that?' or else, if the uninitiated visitor was lucky enough to be able to discern a face, he or she would be safe to dispute with me as to its beauty. So I dropped out of the way of inviting attention to this Madonna vision, and kept it as far as I could to myself. Perhaps I need not say that it was not I who discovered it; I mean, I did not find it out for myself. It was first shown to me by Athena Rosaire, who indeed taught me to appreciate everything in Athens which is not to be learned from the Greek poets and from one's inner consciousness. We used to say that that face, only half visible to others, was wholly revealed to us; and we used to call it our patroness. That was in what I have often described in these pages as the old days, when Athena was yet on the youthful side of seventeen and looked not nearly so much. Then we were full of idealism and visions of all kinds; and for a while there was none to discourage us. Up to the last day of my stay in Athens at that time our romantic ways only amused and delighted Mrs. Rosaire.

That Madonna face on the inner wall of the Parthenon haunted me in the long, dreamy, languid hours I have spoken of. I could not close or half close my eyes for a moment but it looked sympathetically down upon me; and always as it looked it seemed to grow more and more like the face of Athena Rosaire. I began after a while to nourish and indulge this fancy. I used to enjoy it as the Oriental enjoys his opium or his haschish. It made the languor of unresting hours pass sweetly by to close my eyes and let that face look tenderly down on me, and thus to fall asleep and dream sweet delightful dreams of fair and gracious women who were kind to me and loved me.

When I began to get better, and was able to progress from my bed to a sofa and a sitting-room, I was not allowed much time for dreams. Kindly friends came around me, eager to amuse my imprisoned hours. Steenie was with me constantly, bringing me news of every one, and reading to me and asking me questions. Vlachos and MacMurchad and Paul Hathaway were with me daily. Mrs. Rosaire sent me flowers every day; at least they came in her name, although very likely they had been plucked from Athena's garden by Athena's hand. The Rosaire had often called, I was told, to ask news of my condition. I sometimes indulged myself in the fancy that Athena really did come to see me once or twice, and



that it may have been her face I saw then, and not merely the vision of the face in the Parthenon : but I knew this was a delusion, even while I kept it up. Athens is not exactly the place where even a free English girl could venture on such an enterprise as that of visiting a man, albeit a sick and wounded man, in his room. Lord St. Ives was very attentive in his inquiries ; and Constantine Margarites visited me often, and sent me all manner of delicious fruits. On the whole I was a great personage, and much petted while I was an invalid, and even for some time after : for I still looked pale and romantic, and carried my left arm in a sling. The first day I could get out of the hotel I made solemn calls upon everybody ; attended, I don't know why, by Aristoboulos, as if his presence were a necessary part of the particular ceremonial which I had to go through.

On the whole it was just as well that Vlachos did not come in time to stop our fight ; if it had not gone on I don't think I should ever have come to like old Pollen. He certainly behaved chivalrously, all things considered. He had gone to Vlachos of his own motion entirely, and made him a most ample apology, but he carefully concealed from Vlachos the fact that he was to meet me upon the historic plain of Marathon. He wanted to fight in order to show that he did not apologise to escape the risk of fighting. He was greatly concerned about me, and came to make inquiries incessantly. I positively grew to like him in the end. After all, what great harm is there in wanting to show that you enjoy the acquaintance of peers and other illustrious personages ? If a man has a fine collection of pictures, does he not want to show them off ? If he has travelled much, does he ever miss a chance of boring the company with his travels ? The Lydian king who had the beautiful wife, did he not insist on exhibiting her charms to his friend, even against his friend's express wish and warning ? We are all a little in King Candaules' style, and very few of us are willing to hide our lights under a bushel, as Tristram would put it. Of late it has been the fashion among us to run down snobbery and snobs. The snob is the special mark for our satire. We hunt him and expose him as our ancestors hunted and exposed the witch or the Jew. But our ancestors had at least the excuse that they themselves were not witches or Jews ; whereas we are most of us snobs by nature ; and I don't find that with all our persecution of the snob there is less snobbery now in English society than there was before Thackeray began to write. The difference between Mr. Pollen and other Englishmen is mainly in the fact that Pollen bawls out his marquises and earls while other people insinuate them and imply them. I dare say Pollen would be an

excellent fellow, a man almost without reproach, if the Queen would only make him a duke. Then he would have no occasion to let us know that he was acquainted with various earls. Now I should like to ask my friends in general, how many persons they know of whom the same thing might truly be said? Such weaknesses, to put it mildly, or such defects as most of us have, would remain with us just the same, would be part of our characters, and form subject of comment to our acquaintances just as much after the sovereign had raised us to the higher ranks of the peerage as before. So I came to like Mr. Pollen, and I accepted with pleasure his invitation to a great dinner-party which he insisted on giving to all our friends in honour of my recovery.

I should say that hardly anybody outside the circle of those immediately concerned had the least suspicion that Pollen and I had been fighting a duel. My wound was ascribed to the accidental discharge of a revolver. Athens is a place where people are perpetually popping off fire-arms. On Sunday half the male population of the city may be seen along the slopes of the Acropolis discharging guns and pistols at nothing. If you walk out to 'White Colonos,' the Colonos of *Cedipus* and of *Sophocles*—its olive trees and thick-haunting nightingales are gone, and the hill is now a naked and chalky elevation—you will see two great monuments to men of modern name, and these monuments are dotted and speckled all over with small black spots. These spots are the evidences of the modern Athenian's love for pistol practice. He likes to fire at something when a mark is convenient, and what could be a better target than a great white marble monument? In such a city, then, one does not need elaborate explanation about the accidental going off of a gun or a pistol. I never knew a secret so well kept as was the secret of that duel. Considering that the whole truth was known to at least a dozen persons, of whom not more than four had the slightest personal interest in any concealment, it may seem little short of a miracle that the story did not become public property, and get into the newspapers, which in Athens are keen and unscrupulous about 'personal' items of intelligence. Perhaps the explanation is to be found in the safety caused by a multitude of witnesses. So many people knew all about the duel that perhaps they naturally assumed that all about it was known to everybody else, and therefore they felt no temptation to talk of it. I think it was positively heroic of Pollen to remain silent on the subject. In our prosaic English days to have actually stood up in a duel, and on the plain of Marathon, to have hit your man, and not to talk of it, argues an entirely noble self-negation.

Mr. Pollen's entertainment was given on a grand scale. It was

got up 'reckless of expense,' as Tristram would have said. The hotel did not contain many large rooms, and so it was arranged that the public *salle à manger* should be given altogether to Mr. Pollen and his guests, while the ordinary *table d'hôte* was shunted into the reading-room. We were a goodly company. Nearly all the English in the hotel were guests, and there were some Americans and a few Greeks, and various cosmopolitans. The British Minister was of the company, coming, it was expressly stated, in his capacity of private gentleman, and not as representative of her Britannic Majesty. The implied reason for this reserve was that some of the Greeks were understood to be involved in dubious schemes against the Turk, which the Minister of a friendly Power could not be expected to countenance in the remotest way; but I think there was also some little diplomatic doubt as to the loyalty of the Parliamentary party represented on that occasion by Sarsfield MacMurchad, M.P. Little legations swell into portentous magnitude in matters of this kind; I don't suppose the ambassadors in Paris or Vienna or Constantinople would have troubled themselves to be so scrupulous. Mrs. Rosaire and Athena were among the earliest arrivals. Lady Lance and Nellie followed soon. Paul Hathaway came; and Colonel Gillow and Mr. Hunn, the Northern member of Parliament, and his wife.

Mr. and Mrs. Clissold were newly come to Athens. Mr. Clissold was a fashionable painter from London. He was a great success, not so much artistically as socially. He painted pictures with high classical subjects for the most part, Greek mythology and that sort of thing. Artists among themselves made light of his productions, and I confess that they never seemed to me to have much in them. But the painter became a success with the public and was taken up by Belgravia. His wife was a handsome, stately woman; they said she had been a model: I don't know; she was certainly very picturesque in appearance. This pair, who by virtue of their art ought to have known better, became the most ignoble worshippers of rank. They lived for countesses; they must have dreamed of duchesses. I believe the very countesses and duchesses who patronized them were amused by their almost guileless snobbishness, and made quiet jokes about them in private. The only difference between the Clissolds and Mr. Pollen was that the painter and his wife did not bellow their peerage in general company; they only insinuated it in frequent repetition. They did not throw their duchesses at your head; but they contrived it so that the majestic forms of the duchesses should float around you the while. After all, if Pollen's way was more offensive, yet surely Pollen himself was more excusable. But I

have no doubt my friend the painter and his wife would do a good turn if they had the chance; I have no doubt there was many a nook in the heart of each where human affections had nighed themselves undazzled by the red glare of Debrett.

Perhaps I need hardly say that Lord St. Ives appeared immediately after Mrs. Rosaire and Athena had come; and that Constantine Margarites was by far the best-dressed man in the room. The most picturesque man in the room was certainly to my thinking old Vlachos; the most pretentious woman was Mrs. Clissold. The best-dressed woman I dare say was Mrs. Rosaire; the most beautiful woman I need not name.

I was the guest. I had the honour of taking Mrs. Pollen to dinner. Before this I had hardly noticed this lady except to observe that she needlessly wore evening dress at the ordinary *table d'hôte* dinner, and that she talked loudly of duchesses and of marquises. Just as I gave her my arm, my undamaged right, it suddenly occurred to me that she was not quite the merely commonplace woman I had taken her to be. She had great dark eyes and a somewhat coarse mouth; and she had large white shoulders which she was evidently fond of showing to the world. But she was in a certain sense a handsome woman although rather full-blown, and, if I may use the expression, full-flavoured; I mean that everything about her was strongly marked and ostentatious, from the diamonds in her hair to the diamond buckles on her shoes: and from the shrug of her ivory shoulders to the tip of her Japanese fan. Mr. Pollen was so kind in announcing to every one that the banquet was given in my honour that I had from the first not the faintest hope of having Athena assigned to my care; and I saw her after a while enter the dining-room escorted by Lord St. Ives. The British Minister had charge, I think, of Mrs. Rosaire. Mr. Pollen himself conducted Lady Lance. Constantine Margarites took in Mrs. Clissold. Mr. Clissold had to put up with Nellie Lance. Mr. Vlachos had a Russian lady; Paul Hathaway and Steenie and others I lost sight of in the general movement; but I saw later on that chance had thrown Steenie on the other side of Nellie Lance, and that she was shamefully neglecting the great painter for this saucy young companion.

The waiting was done in delightfully scrambling fashion by a combination of strength made up of the regular attendants, the faithful Aristoboulos pressed into the service, the servants of Lord St. Ives and Mr. Pollen, and a little squad of the Albanian retainers of Constantine Margarites. The Greek attendants and the English quarrelled every moment about precedence and privilege and national peculiarities; but as the Greeks spoke English, and

the English spoke no Greek, the Greeks had the immense advantage of being able to make their comments to themselves without any chance of being understood by their foreign rivals.

I had been talking to Mrs. Pollen about the sights of Athens and the dearth of amusements in the city, the lack of a regular theatre and so forth. Suddenly she fixed her large bright lamp-like eyes on me, and said in a significant tone :—

‘You have been to Marathon?’

‘Oh yes; with Mr. Pollen; yes. It was there; in fact, I met with the little accident which——’

‘Quite so. Do you really think I believe the story of that accident?’

I assumed Pollen had betrayed confidence. I had often heard that a middle-class Englishman can keep nothing from his wife. After all, why should I care?

‘Mr. Pollen never told me anything about it,’ she said, as if she had been reading my thoughts.

‘How did you know that I was thinking of that?’

‘It is very easy to follow the thoughts of most people—if you care to take the trouble; but the thoughts of most people are not worth following. Yours were worth following just then; and I knew what you were thinking of.’

‘Well then, what do you know about our visit to Marathon?’

‘Shall I tell you?’

‘If you please, Mrs. Pollen.’

‘Mrs. Pollen! That odious name! Excuse me; don’t look alarmed, pray. A woman may think her name an undesirable one without committing a crime, I suppose?’

‘I suppose so; but I don’t see any reason for not liking your name; it is not a very common name; it is not harsh-sounding.’

‘How should you like to be called Pollen?’

‘Really I don’t know; I dare say I shouldn’t mind if it were my name. But about Marathon?’

‘Well, I know you fought a duel there with my silly husband.’

‘It was I was in fault, Mrs. Pollen; not he. I assure you I was determined that no harm should happen to him.’ I began making an awkward apology or explanation which was intended to save me from her hatred while not inculcating her husband.

‘Mr. Cleveland, if you suppose I am a woman who would think the less of you because you carried out a quarrel with her husband to its bitter end, I can assure you that you are quite mistaken. If Mr. Pollen offended you, it was quite right that you should look for some reparation; and I am sure he did offend you. Tell me one thing; was the quarrel about a woman?’

'Come now, Mrs. Pollen; you say you can read one's thoughts like print when they are worth reading; can't you read that? I could give you a full and satisfactory answer out of hand; but I prefer to test your skill.'

'Will you run the risk?'

'Most certainly.'

'A woman had something to do with it.'

I shook my head.

'A bad shot, Mrs. Pollen; a very bad shot.'

'I don't believe it! Pray excuse me; I didn't mean to say that, Mr. Cleveland; but I am sure that there was some thought of a woman in your mind when you quarrelled with my foolish husband.'

'My dear Mrs. Pollen, the whole truth of the matter is that I was in a beastly bad humour, and that I was foolish enough to take offence at something Mr. Pollen said about Greece; and that was the whole affair. Ask Mr. Vlachos; he will tell you. No woman's name was ever mentioned or thought of.'

'Mr. Cleveland, I can see this very moment that you are not quite sincere with me. Perhaps you don't know it yourself; but you were thinking of a woman then, and you are thinking of a woman now. I dare say I can tell you her name if you like.'

'Oh, please don't!' I stupidly said in my confusion. Mrs. Pollen's eyes flashed a gleam of triumph.

'I told you so!' she said.

'But she had nothing to do with our little quarrel.'

'She had; yes, she had. Mr. Pollen knew nothing about it; it doesn't take me much trouble to read his thoughts; they are not very deep. But you had in your mind some thought which made his words—I forget what silly stuff they were—sound like a disparagement of something your goddess had set her soul on; and that was what stirred you. Mr. Cleveland, don't provoke me to a display of my skill; or I will tell you wonders.'

Now the honest truth is, as every one of my intelligent readers will already have known perfectly well, that Pollen's contemptuous words about Greece had touched me because they seemed to insult the cause Athena Rosaire had at heart; and I was furthermore in a particularly bad humour because of Athena's way of receiving me. Mrs. Pollen was right enough; a woman had something to do with the quarrel. Why not let her go on and see if she had guessed who the woman was? It would be better for me to know.

'You have gone a little bit right, Mrs. Pollen, but I don't believe you know nearly as much as you think.'

'Shall I tell you the lady's name?'

'If you please,' I answered in a low tone, and bent over her white and large shoulder. I fancy some of the guests thought she and I were opening an animated flirtation.

She looked down the table directly at Athena Rosaire, who was deep in conversation with Lord St. Ives. She kept her eyes fixed for a moment on Athena, until Athena, as if under a spell, suddenly looked up. She caught Mrs. Pollen's eyes, looked at us both for a moment, and then looked away.

'Shall I tell you the name of the lady now?' Mrs. Pollen asked in a low exultant tone; 'or are you satisfied that I know it?'

'My dear Mrs. Pollen, you have made a guess, and you are very quick and clever.'

'More quick and clever than you thought me, Mr. Cleveland; come, confess.'

'Much more quick and clever than I thought you, Mrs. Pollen; but then remember that I never until to-night had an opportunity of talking with you.'

'No; you simply regarded me as vulgar old Pollen's vulgar wife; isn't that so?'

'I like Mr. Pollen very much.'

'Oh, you do? Now, perhaps; I suppose he has some good qualities that men would see. But did you like him then? What did you think of him then?'

'Well, if you press me for an answer, Mrs. Pollen, I didn't much like him at first.'

'No; he is rather a diamond in the rough, is he not? That would be the graceful and complimentary way of putting it. Shall we say diamond in the rough?'

'Are we right to discuss your husband's merits in this sort of way? I do like him now; I think he has a great many good and many qualities; I don't say that he is a man to attract a lady; but surely there is one lady who ——'

'Yes; I know what you were going to say. There is one lady who ought to have some consideration for him; his wife?'

'Quite so: that is what I was going to say.'

'You don't know what it is,' she said in a low tone, but with such intensity of bitter expression that I looked up alarmed to see if it had not attracted some attention; 'you don't know what it is for a woman to be married to such a man, and to know that people laugh at him, and to have to endure him for years, and never to be able to relieve her mind by saying out what she thinks of him. There—I have relieved my mind for once. Do you know why I have spoken to you? Because I have a sort of claim on

you, for you have made him worse than he was before. You have made him a hero in his own eyes. Come, you think me a very odd sort of woman, don't you ?'

'You can read everybody's thoughts, Mrs. Pollen ; I needn't give you any answer.'

'I know that you have just been wondering in your own mind whether I was not a little mad.'

Some idea of the kind had certainly been crossing my brain more than once while we were carrying on this extraordinary conversation ; if that could be called a conversation in which the talk was almost all on one side.

'But I am not out of my senses, Mr. Cleveland, not a bit ; although sometimes I feel as if it would be a great relief to be out of them under all the circumstances. Now let us get back to the commonplace, and we need not say any more about this talk. You know more of me, Mr. Cleveland, than anybody else does ; I don't know whether that will interest you or not.'

Happily for us our next neighbours at the table on either side were loud and incessant talkers, and I could therefore feel some confidence that nothing said by Mrs. Pollen to me could be heard. I was utterly bewildered by her manner and her words. I had never imagined that she was anything other than a feminine copy of Mr. Pollen ; and now she turns out to be a woman burning with hatred of her husband and her position, a woman full of half-insane fantasies. As I looked at her in the light of these new ideas about her, it seemed to me that she was a woman who must have a story behind her. Her full voluptuous lips had something tyrannical and cruel in their mould. She might have been a Roman empress of the later time. Surely there is blood other than English in her veins ?

'Do I interest you ?' she said, looking suddenly up, and flashing on me her dark eyes.

'Very much,' I answered truly.

'I am glad. You are to me the most interesting man in all the world ; but you need not look modest ; it is not because of anything in yourself. Should you like to know why you are so interesting to me ?'

'Yes ; I am curious on that point.'

'Because,' she said, with as easy a smile as if she were discussing the chances of fine weather to-morrow ; 'because you had it in your power to set me free ; and you did not do it. Can I ever forgive you, do you think ?'

'Come now, Mrs. Pollen, I know you are trying to startle me



by talking in this way; but I'm not in the least alarmed; I know you don't mean what you say.' I said this, but I don't think I believed it.

She smiled a scornful smile. There was a momentary lull in the conversation near us, and her neighbour on the other side made some remark to her. She answered him in a word or two, and when she turned to me again she was as much changed in manner as if she had become another woman.

'Do you know the Duchess of Orme, Mr. Cleveland?'

She spoke in a loud, self-asserting voice; she was in fact once again the Mrs. Pollen whom I had seen at the *table d'hôte* the first day of my present stay in Athens.

I explained that I had had the honour of seeing the duchess in the street, but that I was not acquainted with her.

'Oh, but you should know her; she is so sweet; I am so fond of her; my dearest Jennie! Jennie is one of her names—you know that, of course; I always call her Jennie. And her sister the Marchioness of Loraine; ain't she charming? But I don't think Susie—that is the Marchioness—is so charming as my darling Jennie.'

As she rattled on in this loud and vulgar way, my hostess, for so I suppose I must call her, gave me a look from under her eye-lashes every now and then full of audacious and impudent humour. She was now performing for the edification of the table her familiar part as Pollen's wife; and it pleased her to invite my attention to the fact that it was a performance.

'You think it a little overdone perhaps?' she quietly observed to me. 'Not at all, I can assure you; it will do admirably. Well, I set you free for the present; I return good for evil. I must try to catch the Speaker's eye; I mean Lady Lance's eye. Ah; I have done it.' She slowly and deliberately gathered up her handkerchief and her fan and her gloves and rose from her chair. I held the door open as the ladies passed out. Athena was slow in coming; she was lingering, I supposed, for another word with Lord St. Ives. No, it was apparently for another word with Master Steenie; I felt relieved. At last she comes. As she was passing me she said quickly, 'Come and speak to me upstairs, Kelvin, by-and-by—I want to say something to you.'

We, the men, settled down to cigarettes and coffee. I am sure Steenie's heart was torn by conflicting emotions. I know he was longing to go upstairs at once and talk to Athena or even to Nellie Lance; but then where would be his pretensions to man-hood?

## CHAPTER XI.

'AND THENCE FROM ATHENS TURN AWAY!'

A WHOLE suite of rooms on the floor above the dining hall had been placed at our disposal for this grand festivity. The after-dinner proceedings turned into a sort of general reception or 'at home' or 'open evening' on the part of Mrs. Pollen. Everybody staying in the hotel, and indeed everybody who chose to enter, was made welcome. When we went upstairs, therefore, after Mr. Pollen had insisted on proposing the health of his 'gallant young friend,' myself, and the gallant young friend had mumbled and stammered a sort of reply, we found the rooms crowded with a truly cosmopolitan company. There was music; there were card parties; there was the usual patter of conversation; and the soft hum of flirtation. I went in search of Athena. One fact which I observed as I made my way through the rooms gave me much satisfaction; Mrs. Clissold had already managed to get hold of Lord St. Ives. She had secured him in a window, and was pouring words into his ears, soft words of tentative flirtation possibly; and she was standing in one of her most picturesque attitudes. Mrs. Clissold dearly loved a lord to flirt with; and even if she should be seen by her husband he will not object; he knows she means no harm, and he likes her to flirt with a lord. There were several naval officers present belonging to vessels of divers nations anchored at Piræus; and there were many Greeks: the latter mostly eating jam or telling their beads.

A stranger is apt at first to set the Greeks down for the most devout people under the sun. Observe a Greek in any place or condition where he is not actively engaged in positive work of some kind; and what is he doing? He is telling his beads. He carries in his hand a rosary of beads, and these he is passing incessantly through his fingers. Observe the passengers on the deck of one of the steamers that sail from the Piræus for Nauplia or for Corinth. About as large a proportion are telling their beads as there would be of men smoking china-bowled pipes on the deck of an Elbe steamer. The Prime Minister reclining on the Treasury bench, if I may adopt English Parliamentary phraseology, and waiting for his adversary's speech to come to an end in order that he may rise and reply to it, is all the while telling his beads. What, it will be asked, can this be but devotion of some sort? Not a bit of it; and neither is it hypocritical pretence. The man with the beads has no idea of passing off for a devotee; he does

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not want you to suppose that he is like the Roman Catholic believer, piously telling his rosary in the church. He is simply amusing himself; he plays with a string of beads as old-fashioned Americans used to whittle a stick; 'just for passen-time,' as a Greek, who did not speak English quite as well as Vlachos and Margarites, once explained it to me.

I found Athena. She was in the farthest corner of the farthest room, quite out of the hurly-burly; but she was not alone. MacMurchad was leaning over her chair on the one side; Paul Hathaway was talking to her on the other; Nellie Lance was seated on a footstool at her feet. It was a pretty sight to see that group as I came along. Paul Hathaway was discoursing with great apparent eloquence and earnestness; already I could catch some words about man's highest purposes and noblest aspirations. He was gazing upon Athena with sparkling eyes, while little Nellie looked up to him with eyes that burned like his own, but with a cheek which, though indeed glowing now, was not hectic. I know that Paul Hathaway was not thinking of Nellie, and that she was only thinking of him. MacMurchad was silent; he was apparently absorbed in one of his occasional fits of silence; I am sure he was not listening to a word of Paul Hathaway's earnest eloquence; his eyes and his ears were with his heart, and that was not by any means far away. Of whom or what was Athena thinking, I wonder; and how am I to get a chance of a word with her?

She settled the question; for when she saw me she called me, and rose to meet me.

'Thank you so much for coming so soon, Kelvin; I want to speak to you. Will you excuse me, Mr. Hathaway; Mr. MacMurchad?' She got rid of her admirers with a smile to each, which I hope repaid them; and left Paul Hathaway, I trust, to say something to Nellie Lance.

'It is very warm, Kelvin; don't you think so? Let us find some cooler place.'

'Come out on one of the balconies,' I said.

'Yes; that would be delicious; I find these rooms and lights and all the noise very trying.'

As we were passing through one of the rooms towards the open windows, which admitted to a balcony, we saw Mrs. Rosaire with a little group of admirers round her.

'Athena, love, where are you going?'

'On the balcony for a little, Mamma; it is very hot.'

'Child, you will take cold.'

'Dear, you know I never take cold.'

'Do at least put this over your head, Athena; I really insist.'







*'It was a pretty sight to see that group.'*



She handed me for Athena a white lace shawl, which she had worn earlier in the evening, and which had now been lying on the arm of her chair.

Athena dutifully took the shawl and wrapped it round her head, and tied it lightly under her chin, and thus protected from the chills of night, came out with me upon the balcony. Her sweet sad face looked pale and worn, I thought.

During the later part of autumn and all the winter, the climate of Athens is as uncertain as our own. This day had been beautiful; almost like summer. It had succeeded many wet wild days, and was to be followed by others still more wild and wet. But this evening brought with it no memory and no forecast of foul weather. The night air was not warm indeed, but it was mild. There was a soft light in the sky; the moon was rising. It was not such a moon as we had seen shining on the Parthenon that night before my Marathon adventure; it was a thin, pale, gleaming crescent; the stars had just enough of winter in them to be of steel, not of silver. To our left could be seen above all intervening streets and buildings the summit of the Acropolis and the pillared outlines of the Parthenon, looking as if hewn from ebony, against the faintly lighted sky. For a moment neither of us spoke.

‘Kelvin, I wanted so much to say something to you. So you have been risking your life for Greece? Yes; I know it all; Mr. Vlachos told me.’

‘I only wish it had been for Greece, Athena—but it wasn’t anything so heroic. It was because Mr. Vlachos was insulted and couldn’t very well do anything himself. But old Pollen was so sorry after; and he’s not half a bad fellow.’

‘Yes; I know the whole story. Still it was for Greece; because Greece was insulted; and Mr. Vlachos through Greece—but it was very rash and foolish of you, Kelvin.’

‘I hope you were not angry with me, Athena; I couldn’t help doing something.’

‘No, Kelvin; it was rash; and a man oughtn’t to risk his life in that way; and I suppose it is a sinful thing to fight a duel; I suppose so; and at all events that is the proper thing for me to say, is it not, Kelvin? But it was not the sort of folly that a girl like me would blame you much for. No; I thought it was what I should have expected from you, and what I should have done myself, if I were a man. But now tell me; when are you going back to England?’

‘Is this what you had to say to me, Athena?’

‘Yes, Kelvin; just this. When are you going back to England? Why are you wasting your time here in Athens?’



'Truly I suppose I am wasting my time; meanly and miserably wasting it,' I said with bitter emphasis.

'Yes, Kelvin—not miserably, I hope, and not meanly; but wasting it. You have a career surely; you have talents—you mean to be something and to do something; you can do nothing and be nothing here in Greece. When I heard the story of that Marathon affair—I heard it first with shocking exaggeration; I heard that you would not recover—then I felt as if I had some part in your death; and when I heard after that you would recover I made up my mind that I would beg of you not to stay any longer in Greece. I grudge every day you spend in Athens. You will take my advice and go home to your own country, will you not? We all wish you too well to care to see you wasting your life here, to no purpose.'

My right hand was resting on the edge of the balcony; Athena touched it with hers, a touch of kindly tender insistence. But I made no response to this mute appeal. I stood in sullen silence. I was angry at what seemed to me the cruelty of her advice. Did she think it was so easy for me to go in that way? Had she no heart?

'You are angry with me, Kelvin. I am sorry; but I think it best to say this to you and to give you this word of advice.'

'Yes, you are right, Athena. It puts one out of pain the sooner, I suppose. But you haven't told me all the story yet. Why are you so anxious to get me out of Athens?'

'I have been thinking of this ever since you got that wound; and she looked with a pained expression at my useless arm; 'I have had it in my mind to-night more than ever. You know something of this place; you can't but see that there are elements of disturbance in Greece which will grow more and more; and you will perhaps get into some danger, and for nothing; for nothing at all. I see that you are impulsive, more so than I thought, and you rush into things, and are easily drawn on, I think. Besides, Kelvin, what have you to do with Greece and her cause? You don't even profess to care about it now—although I think you did once. Athens is a place for men who have some set purpose, for strangers, I mean; it isn't a place for you; the men and women one has to meet here are not such as I should have thought you would have cared for. What have you to do with these people here?' She glanced back upon the lighted room. 'What sympathy can there be between you and some of these people? Kelvin, go away from Athens.'

'But surely I have not been wasting much time in Athens

which I might have saved lately. It was only the other day I went out into the streets for the first time since I was laid up.'

'Yes; but I dread your falling into the ways of the people who drift into Athens; I hate to see you sink to the level of some of these people. I detest some of the men and women one has to meet here; I don't know how mamma can endure it; but as it is so I can't help it. You are free.'

'Are you speaking of Greeks, Athena? I should not have thought you felt so much dislike to them.' This was meant as a touch of sarcasm on my part. I was thinking of Constantine Margarites.

She understood me, I dare say, but she answered with perfect good temper:—

'No, Kelvin; I was not speaking of Greeks. I like the Greeks, and this is their city and their home. But I don't like the swarm of English and half-English and other foreign idlers and adventurers who honour us with their passing visits.'

'Such men as MacMurchad, for example?'

'You know I don't mean such men as Mr. MacMurchad—Mr. MacMurchad is a gentleman, and he has brains and spirit and a heart. I admire him ever so much; no one could help admiring him.'

'Have you bidden him to go away?'

She looked up at me inquiringly.

'It is different, quite different. Mr. MacMurchad has what seem to him good reasons for staying here, and I only know him quite lately, I have no right to advise Mr. MacMurchad. Surely, Kelvin, you will see that you have more claim on me?'

I shook my head.

'It is very kind of you, Athena, but I don't feel as if I had any special claim upon you lately. Can't you tell me plainly why you want to send me away?'

'I have told you very, very plainly—because, if you stay, you will either get into danger or you will fall into mere idleness and mix up with these people and be like them—and I don't want you to do either if I can prevent it. You don't know what things are going on here as well as I do, and there will come a crisis some day.'

'I don't understand you, Athena; you tell me to go, but the reason you give is a reason to make a man stay. I am not afraid of anything that could happen to me.'

'I am, on your account. Will you promise me, Kelvin, to leave Athens?'

'You are peremptory with me,' I said ruefully.

'Because I think so much of you.'

'But this danger—won't others be in it?'

'Others will be in it, but it is their duty and their proper work; and there are other reasons too why I want you to go. Well, I have said my say, Kelvin, and it only comes to this: I think you had better, oh, ever so much better, leave Athens! Now, I must not stay talking here any longer, Kelvin; mamma will think I am courting catarrh, and consumption, and all manner of dreadful things. Will you tell me to-morrow whether I have prevailed, whether you are willing to take my advice? Think of it to-night, tell me to-morrow.'

Having to make some answer, I said, 'Yes, I will tell you to-morrow.'

'You will come and see me? Thanks, we must go now.'

Yet, as we were about to go back into the rooms, she turned for a moment in silence to look over Athens. Little indeed could be seen but the sky, the stars, the thin moon, and the Parthenon. The living city was lost to us; its streets and houses were swallowed up in deep shadow. But the crest of the Acropolis and the pillars of the Parthenon made another and a fairer Athens; an ideal Athens, an Athens of poetry and art and heroic passionate dreams, an Athens which will never grow old. Athena looked across Athens; I looked at her.

'It must be hard to leave this place,' she said, as if she were only thinking aloud. 'I so love it, Kelvin.'

'And you send me away from it?'

'Ah, but it is nothing to you; I mean, it cannot be to you what it is to me. Perhaps we shall not look over Athens any more, Kelvin, you and I together. Does it not sometimes seem as if a great sea had risen up between this time and the time when we were young, and swept everything away?'

There was something unspeakably tender in the tones of her voice; her face was like that of one who waits some coming certain fate, and meanwhile casts one longing loving glance back on some lost moment of happiness and hope.

'Athena!' I took her hand in mine. She turned to me with one instant of kindly sweet expression, and then took her hand abruptly away.

'I must go now,' she said. 'You will leave Athens, Kelvin? You will do this for me?'

She left the balcony without giving me an opportunity of saying a word more. I had to go back into the room with her, and she asked me to bring her to her mother. I did so, and I left her. I was not unhappy; her whole manner filled me, not

indeed with hope, but with a sort of dismal comfort. Dismiss me as she would, she was not absolutely indifferent to me. What I had said to her on the balcony, I felt—that while her words ordered me away her manner asked me to stay. This she did not mean. I know too well the sincerity of all her words; I know that she wishes me to leave Athens; but that very wish, whatever its source, is only another reason why I must stay. What danger could there be for me? and what if there were danger, is there not danger for her? I will throw myself into the Greek cause to which she is devoted; I will show her that I am not unworthy of a part in it; at least I can show her that I know how to die as well as the best Greek of them all.

Filled with this resolve, which was indeed a genuine resolve, I felt suddenly encouraged and lightened, and I went back into the crowd and tried to throw myself into the spirit of the evening's festivities. There was a sort of old-fashioned and depressing air about the English part of the entertainment. Most of the English men and women there had been a long time away from England, and had kept up in various foreign lands the form of mutual entertainment which was in usage at home in their earlier days. Men were called upon to sing their particular songs, which some of them sang without any accompaniment, and which belonged to a school of ballad music not much in favour now in London drawing-rooms. A man seemed to have made a song his own just as much as if he had composed the words and the music; he had acquired a sort of copyright in it by virtue of having sung it very often; no friend would think of anticipating him in it, or indeed of singing it at all in his presence. A man had to be pressed too before he would sing his first song for the evening; he said he had a cold and couldn't sing to-night, that he had come out without the least intention of singing, that they really must excuse him, that everybody knew he would sing if he could, and then at last just as the company appeared likely to give in and press him no further he would produce his roll of music and begin to sing, and from that moment forth the difficulty was to get him to stop. We had some of Dibdin's songs, and some of Haynes Bayly's, and we had Scotch ballads and heavy English comic songs echoing dolefully the mirth of a past generation. To be sure this less modern minstrelsy was agreeably diversified by Nellie Lance's musical contributions from the latest London burlesque. Colonel Gillow favoured us with various Servian war-songs which we all applauded mightily; Paul Hathaway not merely recited but actually volunteered to recite "Barbara Fritchie."

Mrs. Clissold regarded the whole performances with undisguised

contempt; this was not the sort of thing she was accustomed to in the drawing-rooms of her aristocratic friends in the West End. She said as much to me, and then considerably apologised for what she had said, seeing that the feast was given in my honour, and the songs were in a manner sung for me.

'Kelvin, I want you to sit next to me for a few minutes and talk to me; sit here, Kelvin.' Mrs. Rosaire was unusually imperative in manner. 'And, Kelvin, people are looking at us, I dare say, and they may be trying to guess what we are talking about, and I don't want them to. I want you to smile all the while as if we were talking of something pleasant.'

'I hope we shall talk of something pleasant, Mrs. Rosaire,' I said, settling myself down at her command on a little cushion at her feet.

'I don't know, Kelvin, I have something serious to say; but please don't begin to look grave already. Good gracious, have you men no power to conceal your thoughts?'

'I'll do my best, Mrs. Rosaire; let us dissemble; I am dissembling; don't you see?'

Mrs. Rosaire shook her shoulders impatiently; she was not dissembling particularly well, I thought.

'This is what I want to say to you, Kelvin. I wish you wouldn't talk so much to Athena to-night; I wish you wouldn't go off into balconies and places with her. There, now you are looking angry; do you want people to guess what we are saying?'

'May I not even speak to Athena? Am I to be the only man who is not to speak to her?'

'Of course you may speak to her; *can't* you smile, Kelvin? Just to oblige me?'

I could not help calling to mind a somewhat similar request made to Mr. Richard Swiveller in the 'Old Curiosity Shop'; and the thought made me smile, although I was not in a very lightsome humour just at that moment.

'That's better, Kelvin, that's better; thank you very much. What I was saying was this: of course you may speak to Athena, you are her old friend and that sort of thing; but I very much wish you would avoid the appearance of any confidential talk with her just now; just for the present; it only gives annoyance.'

'To Athena?'

'I didn't say that, Kelvin, and that isn't the question, we were not talking of Athena; I mean it was not of her I was thinking when I said it gives annoyance. I *do* wish you would smile, Kelvin, I see that tiresome inquisitive Lady Lance staring at us: No, I haven't read it yet, we are so slow about getting new books

out here, but I am told it is immensely clever.' This was for the benefit of some one who happened to be passing. 'No, Kelvin, I was not speaking of Athena; she is thoughtless about some things; she might not think of what people would say. It gives annoyance, Kelvin, and I don't think you want to be a cause of annoyance.'

'To whom does it give annoyance, Mrs. Rosaire? To you? I hope not, surely.'

'Well, no, not directly, not in that way; but, oh, you can guess, you have no difficulty in guessing. It gives annoyance to Lord St. Ives, and I wish you wouldn't do it, Kelvin.'

'Am I then the only man in all this company who is not to have the privilege of exchanging a friendly word or two with Miss Rosaire unless within the hearing of the whole room? Is that what you would have, Mrs. Rosaire?'

'If you put it in that way, Kelvin, yes; I think it would be better that you avoided Athena for the present.'

'But why must I avoid her; I and nobody else?' I was now altogether forgetting to smile.

'Well, you know, Lord St. Ives has fancies sometimes; all men have. He thinks you admire Athena a great deal, and perhaps he thinks that as she has known you so long she likes you very much; you can understand all that, can't you?'

'But what right has Lord St. Ives to think about the matter at all? How dare he presume to give any opinion?'

'Shall we take a look at the whist-players, Kelvin? Will you give me your arm?' We rose and I proceeded to escort Mrs. Rosaire towards another room where some people were playing whist. Of course we were not going there; this was only Mrs. Rosaire's way of avoiding suspicion; we came to a stand in one of the corridors, and I leaned against a window.

'You see, Kelvin, if you will speak so loud and look so angry, we had better come where there are no listeners near.'

'Well, Mrs. Rosaire, I am hushed and tranquil now. I only wish to ask you whether Lord St. Ives has as yet any right to pretend to any control over Athena's movements?'

'I don't say he has any right as yet, Kelvin. I never said he had; but you know all my views on that matter; I am sure I told you everything in the friendliest way, and all for your own guidance. I want Lord St. Ives to have that right, and as soon as possible, and to go on as you have been going on to-night might do harm, and couldn't possibly do any good. Now don't you understand me, Kelvin, at last?'

'I understand you perfectly well, Mrs. Rosaire; but don't you think you make a mistake in telling this to me?'

'No, Kelvin. Why?'

'Do you make no allowance for the very thoughts and hopes which your own words are likely to bring up in my mind? If I am so inconvenient and troublesome to your plans, why is that but because you think I am not so entirely without a chance as you have always been telling me? If this is really as you say, why should I give way to Lord St. Ives; at least until Athena herself tells me I must do so? You have made a mistake, Mrs. Rosaire; you have given me a new hope.'

'Oh, Kelvin; is that the way you take it? But you said yourself the other night—you told me with your own lips, that you were out of the running. These were your very words: "out of the running." Of course when you said that, I took it for granted that you meant it; and I thought I could speak freely to you to-night.'

'Yes; I said I was out of the running——'

'You did; you can't deny it,' Mrs. Rosaire interrupted me with a triumphant air.

'Of course I don't deny it. I said it because I thought Athena cared no more for me than—than you do for me, or for anybody,' I could not help adding.

'Kelvin, how can you say such things to me; to me of all women in the world?'

'You have been recalling some words of mine,' I went on without taking any notice of her interruption; 'but I am sure you must remember some other words of mine as well. Don't you remember what I said to you the very first day I saw you in Athens this time? I told you I would observe Athena for myself; and that if I found her changed to me I would not make any attempt to set up any claim or to bring back old memories; I would go away and forget her, if I could?'

'Yes; ' Mrs. Rosaire nodded assent; 'I do remember your saying that, certainly.'

'And do you not remember my also saying that if I saw any reason to believe that Athena was not so changed as you tried to make me think I would not give her up, even for her mother?—and that I would take my dismissal from herself and from no one else? Don't you remember that, Mrs. Rosaire?'

'Perhaps I do,' she answered coldly. 'But I don't quite see what that has to do with the matter.'

'Only this; that if Athena has quite changed to me there could be no reason for alarm in anybody's mind because she and I exchanged a few words of conversation.'

'It isn't a question of what Athena does or thinks; it is a question of what others may think.'

'What Lord St. Ives may think?'

'Well; yes. He might imagine that Athena feels as—as she does not feel; and there might be misunderstandings.'

'And there may be misunderstandings the other way, Mrs. Rosaire, may there not? Other people may mistake Athena's feelings too. I have submitted very quietly up to this; don't you think I have a right to know once for all from Athena herself whether your account of her feelings is right?'

'Kelvin,' Mrs. Rosaire said, now decidedly very angry; 'I see no use in our saying any more about this. Is it to be peace or war between you and me?'

'I don't want war, Mrs. Rosaire; I will go and see Athena to-morrow and learn her wishes from her own lips. Perhaps you are right; very likely. If so, you will have peace secured to you; I shall not trouble your plans any more.'

'You will go to Athena to-morrow, Kelvin?'

'Yes, Mrs. Rosaire.'

'Without asking my permission?'

'Yes, Mrs. Rosaire; I cannot help it.'

Mrs. Rosaire seemed to grow alarmed, she put her dainty kerchief to her eyes. But she was not crying; I knew that. It was a purely ornamental kerchief, a web of lace which a tear or a dewdrop would have spoilt for the time.

'Kelvin, I never, never, never could have expected this of you! You would try if you could to set my daughter in rebellion against me. And I was always so fond of you, as if you were my son, my own son! You might at least ask a mother's permission before going to put such a question to her daughter.'

Then she withdrew the kerchief, dry, and assumed the air of one who has subdued her natural feelings in obedience to the dictates of dignity and destiny.

'I am more magnanimous than you, Kelvin. I give you the permission which you have not thought it worth your while to ask. Go and see my daughter to-morrow; you have my full permission. If you wish, I will tell her that you desire to see her; and I will even say, Kelvin, that you have asked for my permission and that you have received it. Shall I say this, Kelvin?'

'Mrs. Rosaire, I am a very plain rough sort of person;' she made a gentle movement expressive of deprecation, 'and I can only say that I think in this and all other matters it would be best to keep to the plain truth. But I think I was wrong all the same; I think I ought to have asked for your permission, and I



wish I had done so, and I beg you to forgive me. I ought not to have forgotten that Miss Rosaire is your daughter, still living under your roof.' I said all this as much in bitterness as in apology. Mrs. Rosaire accepted the apology, and was innocent of any perception of the bitterness.

'Then we are quite reconciled, Kelvin, are we not—and we understand each other once again? It is peace and not war?'

I could not tell; I had my grim misgivings, but I did not say anything of them to Mrs. Rosaire.

## CHAPTER XII.

### WHAT THE DAY AFTER THE FEAST SAID.

THE hotel was depressed, disorganised, and out of humour the day after the feast. People came late to breakfast; every room seemed disordered; everything seemed out of joint. It rained dismally. I don't know of any place where the rain, when it comes down heavily, is more dismal than Athens. It blots out everything that everybody wants to see. The Acropolis disappeared in mist. Even Lycabettus was hidden from us in the city; the purple of Hymettus was turned a dull gray; and there was water in Ilissus. As I fought my way for a walk through the drenching rain I actually saw women hurrying to wash their clothes in the suddenly renovated stream. I personally cared little whether it rained or not. I walked for miles about the outskirts of Athens, turning over every word that Athena had said to me and I had said to her. The more I thought over our talk on the balcony the less I could understand what she meant by her repeated warnings against the companionship of worthless persons. All that she had said about political danger I understood of course; though I could not see how any such danger was likely to threaten me. But her other words, which at the time they were spoken I had hardly noticed, began more and more to occupy my thoughts.

At as early an hour as one could decently make a call, I drove through drenching rain to Mrs. Rosaire's house, and asked for Athena. Perhaps I was expected. Mademoiselle was at home, Athena's French maid, now growing accustomed to the ways of English girls, said, when appealed to by the serving man, who looked like the ideal pirate of a schoolgirl who is learning to draw. I was shown into the room which looked upon Athena's garden, and in a moment Athena herself appeared. She was looking pale, I thought, and wearied.

'What a miserable day,' she said.

'Yes,' said I, and there I came to a stand.

Athena rallied first.

'I was expecting you, Kelvin. You have come to tell me that you will take my advice, have you not? You will leave Athens?'

'I have come to tell you something indeed, Athena; but not that. I have come to tell you—what you know already. Why do you talk of leaving Athens to a man who loves you?'

'It is not true!' she said with flashing eyes. 'It is not true—I don't believe it.'

'God knows it is true; and you know it too, Athena.'

'And you waited until now to tell me so?' she asked scornfully, but keeping down the burst of temper, strange to her, with which she had met my first and outspoken declaration.

'Waited until now, Athena? How long have you known that I loved you? How many years is it since I first told you that I loved you? Did you ever tell me then to leave Athens? Was it not understood between us; between you and me? You have changed since, I suppose; but you can't have forgotten the days when you and I understood each other; and I have never changed.'

'We were too young then to know our own minds,' she said more gently. 'We began life as man and woman too soon, Kelvin; and perhaps we are paying the penalty now; perhaps we feel old before our time. We have outgrown romantic love, have we not? Anyhow we must try to grow out of it. That time long ago when you ceased to write I took it so much to heart—I thought you need not have given up quite so soon; but you were wise, and it was much better ——'

'Oh, Athena, I did not give up so soon; I wrote again and again.' Then I stopped short. Could I tell the girl of her mother's treachery? And after all I only suspected the treachery—I had no proof of it. Could I accuse her mother to Athena without being able to show any ground for my accusation?

'What does all this matter now, Athena? I am here; I have not changed; I am still just the same; except that I love you more than ever.'

'Hush, Kelvin; you must not say that any more—it is too late for all that now. Perhaps when first you came back to Athens—this time—perhaps if you had come to me in the old way and told me—then, I don't know; things might have been different. But you seemed so changed then, and I thought you did not want to renew old, forgotten stories; and I was glad; yes, Kelvin, in a sort of way I was glad; although my heart was sad and bitter too, and I cried many a tear; you would not think I was a woman

given much to tears, would you? I was glad, in a way; because I had brought myself in all these years to think of other objects in life than mere fallings in love; I had taught myself to believe that I was meant for something better in life, something which would do good and make it worth one's while to have lived. Otherwise it isn't much worth one's while to have lived, Kelvin, is it?'

'All this means,' I said, 'that you don't care about me any more, Athena. That is the plain truth of it; why not put it into words?'

'No, it doesn't mean that. It means that at first I did not see any use in trying to get over difficulties; and I came to believe that you cared nothing about me; and I tried to school myself into the belief that everything was for the best.'

'And you have succeeded,' I said with bitterness.

'Well, I have succeeded so far as this; I don't believe love is so much in life as girls are apt to think it; I believe there are other things much higher, Kelvin. How long will love last? Doesn't every book we read tell us how people soon grow tired of each other? Don't we hear how people find each other out, and how unlike heroes and heroines we all come out to be? I shouldn't care to run that risk, Kelvin. I care for you so much as that. I don't run that risk with ——'

'With Lord St. Ives?'

'Yes, with Lord St. Ives, supposing he were to ask me to marry him.'

'But he has asked you?'

'Supposing, then, that he and I were to be married; I don't look for a hero in Lord St. Ives. I like him; and he is clever in many ways, and he is straightforward and honourable; that every one says of him; and I am sure he would do his best to make a woman happy; but I don't see anything very heroic in him; and I shouldn't be disappointed if he turned out a mere commonplace sort of person. And he would not expect to find a heroine in me. Between ourselves, Kelvin, I think the more commonplace his wife turned out the better he would like her. I am sure in his secret heart he always associates the idea of a heroine with the notion of a woman on the stage. A quiet English lady is his ideal. You smile; you think I should never turn out quite like that?'

'No; I was not thinking of that, Athena. I was wondering what has become of the great purpose which was to make your life sublime, and which was so much better than love and that sort of thing; what is to become of that great purpose when you marry Lord St. Ives, and turn into a commonplace English lady?'

'I don't complain of your making a jest of my great purpose and not understanding it or believing in it,' she said, and her

manner was grave, and there was a slight colour on her cheek. 'Men don't ever believe, I suppose, that a woman has any object in life higher than making a good marriage. But if I do marry Lord St. Ives, it will be for something better than getting a title; and there are things I would rather do than marry Lord St. Ives—there, let us not talk of all this any more, Kelvin. We don't understand each other.'

'Oh yes; I understand only too well.'

'You are angry with me, Kelvin, and I had hoped that we should be friends for the rest of our lives.'

'Friends? No; never,' I exclaimed. 'We can't be friends, Athena; you have thrown me over; very well; let that be; I can't help that; but I cannot settle down to be your friend.'

'Kelvin, remember; be a little reasonable; if I have brought myself to this state of feeling, you helped to bring me to it. I believed you had forgotten to think about me; and then I made up my mind, and all the time there was growing on me the conviction that it is a stupid thing for men and women to waste their lives in idle love-dreams, from which every one tells us there come such rude awakenings. See how much more generous women are! Only the other night, on the Acropolis, when I saw you and Nellie Lance together; and I thought . . . yes, I did think it then . . . that you were lovers, you and she; did I blame you; was I jealous and angry? Oh no, Kelvin, no indeed. I hoped and believed you were going to be happy, and I prayed for your happiness, for you and her, all that night; and with a bursting heart.' The tears sprang into her eyes as she spoke.

'Yes,' I answered, wholly unsoftened. 'You were quick to believe it—that I was in love with poor little Nellie Lance—and you were glad of it because you were glad to have me off your conscience; to be free of any feeling of doubt or penitence on my account. I didn't understand it all then, Athena, but I do now. It was kind of you, Athena, was it not, to suppose I had changed round all so soon and fallen in love again?'

'So soon, Kelvin? How many years?'

'Years? What years? Do you really want me to believe, Athena, that you didn't know when I came to Athens this time that I was just the same as ever to you?'

'I didn't know it; I didn't believe it; I don't believe it now.'

'Oh!' I could only protest by an angry interruption against what seemed to be her cruel words.

'No, Kelvin; I don't mean that. I believe what you say now; I suppose that being here you found some old memories wake up again and you felt drawn to me, but I don't think it was so at

first. Lately I have been glad of this, but I was not glad at first; we can't help our feelings sometimes; and I was not glad.'

A wild hope took possession of me; the hope that she still only wanted to be pressed in order to give way, that it was not yet too late. I implored her with all a lover's most passionate fervour to let the by-gones be by-gones; to do right to herself and to me; to believe in my love for her, and not to sacrifice her own happiness and mine for mere dreams or scruples. She answered very quietly; in friendly, tender tones:—

'Dear Kelvin, it is impossible. Fortunate for you that it is so, my dear old friend. Just try to think what manner of wife I should make, with my head and heart and brain, such as it is, all filled with schemes and hopes for Greece, in which you could not bring yourself to take the smallest interest. I should truly pity a man like you, a man of soul and some sentiment, Kelvin, with such a wife. If I were to do the right thing, quite the right thing, I ought to remain unmarried always, but if I am not to do that, then at least I will try to do something for Greece.'

'You will marry some one you don't care about?'

'I will tell him so; he shall not be deceived. I will tell him the truth as freely as I am telling you now. If he will not have me on these terms, Kelvin,' she said with a faint smile, 'then he is free to refuse me.'

'Tell me one thing, Athena; this Greek, Constantine——'

'Yes?' she coloured slightly.

'Is he one of your lovers?'

'Have you a right to ask me such a question? Stay, I don't complain; I will give you that extreme privilege of friendship, Kelvin, for the sake of old memories. Mr. Margarites does profess to be one of my lovers, as you put it.'

'He has asked you to marry him?'

'He has.'

'What have you said?'

'I have not refused him.'

'What does that mean, Athena?'

'If he can show himself capable of doing good service to his country, to Greece, I will marry him.'

'And Lord St. Ives?'

'I have not yet given Lord St. Ives a positive answer. I have told him that if he insists upon a final answer now at once it must be no; and he prefers not to press me.'

'In plain words, if Margarites can't do something meanwhile to satisfy you about Greece you will marry Lord St. Ives?'

'Yes, Kelvin; at least I think so.'

‘But, good heavens, Athena, you surely cannot think of keeping these two men hanging on in that kind of way?’

‘I don’t want the men to hang on in any kind of way. I offer them my conditions; they are free to accept them or not.’

‘Does Lord St. Ives understand your conditions?’

‘I think so; I have not put them into exact words, but he understands them.’

‘If Lord St. Ives were to throw himself into the cause of Greece, would he have a better chance?’

‘Oh yes, Kelvin; I am sure he understands that too. Now I have told you all; I don’t suppose any girl ever told as much to a man before; but I trust myself and my secrets to you.’

‘Then you are the prize for the best service done to Greece within a given time, Athena?’

‘If you call that a prize, yes, Kelvin.’

‘You might have given me a chance,’ I said, with rancour in my voice and in my heart. ‘I was worth that at least, Athena. You might have told me that you were set up as the prize for the best man in the struggle, and let me too try my luck. I might have done something as well as Lord St. Ives, or Mr. Margarites.’

‘You, Kelvin? Oh no, I couldn’t make any bargain with you; if I married you it must be for love. I may say this now to you, Kelvin. I did love you once very much, and because that was so I could not make any bargain with you. I hold the memory of our youth too sacred for that. Besides, you couldn’t render the sort of service to Greece that these men can. How wretchedly prosaic is every human cause! We want something for Greece more than even courage and devotion; we want a great deal of money.’

‘Yes; I could not give you that.’

‘No, Kelvin, and I have given myself up to Greece, and one cannot stop halfway.’

‘Will you at least let me help you in this Greek business?’

‘Don’t ask me, Kelvin. I don’t want to have your life on my conscience, and if anything happened to you I should have it all on my conscience, for you don’t care about Greece any more, and you don’t believe in our cause and our projects. No, Kelvin, keep to your own career, which will be a bright and a successful one, I am sure. Don’t stay any longer in Greece; don’t waste your time with us—it would be only a waste of time.’

‘You are very anxious to get rid of me.’

‘Ah, no, Kelvin, if it were only for me, I would keep you here. I am very lonely often and not very happy. Why didn’t the destinies make you my brother? A girl alone as I am is so helpless.’

‘But your mother?’

Athena looked down with an embarrassed manner.

‘Mamma and I are as fond of each other, I think, as a mother and daughter could be; but we haven’t the same ideas about things. She thinks me very wild and romantic and foolish, and she has set her heart on my marrying Lord St. Ives at once and leaving Athens for ever and going to London to make what Mr. Hathaway calls “a splurge” there—well, well, I ought not to talk even to you of such things. I want to talk only of you just now. Take my advice, Kelvin: go away.’

Yet as she spoke these hard words, her voice was all trembling and tears were in her eyes. Never was a man dismissed in a manner less likely to hasten his going, and yet Athena seemed in earnest.

‘Do you really wish me to go, Athena?’

‘Kelvin, I beg, I beseech, I pray you to go, to leave us once for all.’

She stretched out both her hands to me as if for a last farewell, and she turned her face away.

‘Athena, you have some meaning in this—something more than you tell me. Why do you want me to go away? Is it for my sake?’

I had taken her hands in my one available hand. She did not withdraw them. She looked round at me with a white face.

‘For your sake, Kelvin, and for mine too. Oh, pray don’t misunderstand me now. It is not because I am afraid if you were here I should not have strength of mind to keep to my purpose.’

‘I never supposed it,’ I said angrily, ‘I never thought my presence could touch your purpose. What is the danger to me more than to Margarites?’

‘It is so different,’ Athena said, almost passionately. ‘Constantine Margarites is a Greek; he is bound to hold his life at the service of his country. Suppose he were to be killed, what then? He could not die better; his country has a right to his life. If he were my brother, or my lover, and it depended on me, I would bid him go out in his country’s cause, even though I felt sure I was sending him to his death. One can’t live for ever, Kelvin,’ she said with a melancholy half-smile.

‘Very well; that is just what I was saying. I don’t want to live for ever.’

‘Yes, yes, but there is the difference. You are not a Greek. You have a career, you have your English home, and your English people, and your English interests.’

‘My English home! I wonder where that is?’

‘Well, I don’t mean any particular set of four walls just as yet, but you will have a home some day, Kelvin, and there will be the not impossible she; oh yes, I know it. You will get over all this one day and be glad, very glad, that you escaped the chance of being married to the girl in Athens with her one idea. You are not called upon to run any risk for Greece; I am not free to allow you to do anything of the kind. You have a country of your own, a free happy country. Go back to England; be glad that you belong to a free, and strong, and happy land; love it, and serve it; and remember sometimes those who, like us, are not so happy.’

She asked me not to say any more; and I left the room. As I was going out a curtain was partly pushed aside at a room on the ground floor and Mrs. Rosaire beckoned to me. I went just within the curtain.

‘Well, Kelvin; victory or defeat?’

‘Defeat for me, Mrs. Rosaire; defeat all along the line; a decisive battle, and lost by me.’

A look of triumph came over her face for a moment. Then she changed, and her countenance contorted like that of a child who is going to cry.

‘I am so sorry for you, my poor boy,’ she said, ‘indeed, indeed I am! But it couldn’t be helped; I had to do it, and it is all for the best, but I could shed tears for you.’

I dare say she meant what she said. Mrs. Rosaire is not by any means the only person who would like to have the to-be and the not-to-be at once. For all her infantile ways she had outwitted me.

*(To be continued.)*



## Heart and Science.

### A STORY OF THE PRESENT TIME.

BY WILKIE COLLINS.

(The right of translation is reserved.)

#### CHAPTER XLV.

THE first signs of reviving life had begun to appear, when the maid answered the bell. In a few minutes more, it was possible to raise Mrs. Gallilee, and to place her on the sofa. Having so far assisted the servant, Mr. Gallilee took Zo by the hand, and drew back. Daunted by the terrible scene which she had witnessed from her hiding-place, the child stood by her father's side in silence. The two waited together, watching Mrs. Gallilee.

She looked wildly round the room. Discovering that she was alone with the members of her family, she became composed: her mind slowly recovered its balance. Her first thought was for herself.

'Has that woman disfigured me?' she said to the maid.

Knowing nothing of what had happened, the woman was at a loss to understand her. 'Bring me a glass,' she said. The maid found a hand-glass in the bedroom, and presented it to her. She looked at herself—and drew a long breath of relief. That first anxiety at an end, she spoke to her husband.

'Where is Carmina?'

'Out of the house—thank God!'

The answer seemed to bewilder her: she appealed to the maid.

'Did he say, thank God?'

'Yes, ma'am.'

'Can *you* tell me nothing? Who knows where Carmina has gone?'

'Joseph knows, ma'am. He heard Doctor Benjulia give the address to the cabman.'

'Send Joseph up here.'

'No!' said Mr. Gallilee.

His wife eyed him with astonishment. 'Why not?' she asked.

He said quietly, 'I forbid it.'

Mrs. Gallilee turned to the servant. 'Go to my room, and bring me another bonnet and a veil. Stop!' she tried to rise,

and sank back. 'I must have something to strengthen me. Get the sal volatile.'

The maid left the room. Mr. Gallilee followed her as far as the door—still leading his little daughter.

'Go back, my dear, to your sister in the schoolroom,' he said. 'I am distressed, Zo; be a good girl, and you will console me. Say the same to Maria. It will be dull for you, I am afraid. Be patient, my child, and try to bear it for a while.'

'May I whisper something?' said Zo. 'Will Carmina die?' 'God forbid!'

'Will they bring her back here?'

In her eagerness, the child spoke above a whisper. Mrs. Gallilee heard the question, and answered it.

'They will bring Carmina back,' she said, 'the moment I can get out.'

Zo looked at her father. 'Do *you* say that?' she asked.

He shook his head gravely, and told her again to go to the schoolroom. On the first landing she stopped, and looked back. 'I'll be good, papa,' she said—and went on up the stairs. Having reached the schoolroom, she became the object of many questions—not one of which she answered. Followed by the dog, she sat down in a corner. 'What are you thinking about?' her sister inquired. This time she was willing to reply. 'I'm thinking about Carmina.'

Mr. Gallilee closed the door when Zo left him. He took a chair, without speaking to his wife or looking at her.

'What are you here for?' she asked.

'I want to see what you do.'

The servant returned, and administered a strong dose of sal volatile. Strengthened by the stimulant, Mrs. Gallilee was able to rise. 'My head is giddy,' she said, as she took the maid's arm; 'but I think I can get downstairs with your help.'

Mr. Gallilee silently followed them out. At the head of the stairs the giddiness increased. Firm as her resolution might be, it gave way before the bodily injury which Mrs. Gallilee had received. Her husband's help was again needed to take her to her bedroom. She stopped them at the ante-chamber; still obstinately bent on following her own designs. 'I shall be better directly,' she said; 'put me on the sofa.' The maid relieved her of her bonnet and veil, and asked respectfully if there was any other service required. She looked defiantly at her husband, and reiterated the order—'Send for Joseph.' Intelligent resolution is sometimes shaken: the inert obstinacy of a weak creature—man or animal—is immovable. Mr. Gallilee dismissed the maid with

these words: 'I will speak to Joseph myself, downstairs.' His wife heard him with amazement and contempt.

'Are you in your right senses?' she asked.

He paused on his way out. 'You were always hard and head-strong,' he said sadly; 'I knew that. A cleverer man than I am might have found out how wicked you are.' She lay, thinking; indifferent to anything he could say to her. 'Are you not ashamed?' he asked wonderingly. 'Are you not even sorry?' She paid no heed to him. He left her.

Descending to the hall, he was met by Joseph. 'Doctor Benjulia has come back, sir. He wishes to see you.'

'Where is he?'

'In the library.'

'Wait, Joseph; I have something to say to you. If your mistress asks you to what place Miss Carmina has been removed, I forbid you to tell her. If you have mentioned it to any of the other servants—it's quite likely they may have asked you, isn't it?' he said, falling into his old habit for a moment. 'If you have mentioned it to the others,' he resumed, 'I forbid *them* to tell her. That's all, my good man; that's all.'

To his own surprise, Joseph regarded his master with a feeling of sincere respect. Mr. Gallilee entered the library.

'How is she?' he asked, eager for news of Carmina.

'The worse for being moved,' Benjulia replied. 'What about your wife?'

Answering that question, Mr. Gallilee mentioned the precautions that he had taken to keep the secret of Teresa's address.

'You need be under no anxiety about that,' said Benjulia. 'I have left orders that Mrs. Gallilee is not to be admitted. There is a serious necessity for keeping her out. In these cases of partial catalepsy, there is no saying when the change may come. When it does come, I won't answer for her niece's reason, if those two see each other again. Send for your own medical man. The girl is his patient, and he is the person on whom the responsibility rests. Let the servant take that card to him directly. We can meet in consultation at the house.'

He wrote a line on one of his visiting cards. It was at once sent to Mr. Null.

'There's another matter to be settled before I go,' Benjulia proceeded. 'Here are some papers, which I have received from your lawyer, Mr. Mool. They relate to a slander, which your wife unfortunately repeated——'

Mr. Gallilee got up from his chair. 'Don't take my mind back to that—pray don't!' he pleaded earnestly. 'I can't bear

it, Doctor Benjulia—I can't bear it! Please to excuse my rudeness: it isn't intentional—I don't know myself what's the matter with me. I've always led a quiet life, sir; I'm not fit for such things as these. Don't suppose I speak selfishly. I'll do what I can, if you will kindly spare me.'

He might as well have appealed to the sympathy of the table at which they were sitting. Benjulia was absolutely incapable of understanding the state of mind which those words revealed.

'Can you take these papers to your wife?' he asked. 'I called here this evening—being the person to blame—to set the matter right. As it is, I leave her to make the discovery for herself. I desire to hold no more communication with your wife. Have you anything to say to me before I go?'

'Only one thing. Is there any harm in my calling at the house, to ask how Carmina goes on?'

'Ask as often as you like—provided Mrs. Gallilee doesn't accompany you. If she's obstinate, it may not be amiss to give your wife a word of warning. In my opinion, the old nurse is not likely to let her off, next time, with her life. I've had a little talk with that curious foreign savage. I said, "You have committed, what we consider in England, a murderous assault. If Mrs. Gallilee doesn't mind the public exposure, you may find yourself in a prison." She snapped her fingers in my face. "Suppose I find myself with the hangman's rope round my neck," she said, "what do I care, so long as Carmina is delivered from her aunt?" After that pretty answer, she sat down by the girl's bedside, and burst out crying.'

Mr. Gallilee listened absently: his mind still dwelt on Carmina.

'I meant well,' he said, 'when I asked you to take her out of this house. It's no wonder if I was wrong. The strange part of it is, that *you* seem to have been mistaken in allowing her to be moved.'

Benjulia listened with a grim smile; Mr. Gallilee's presumption amused him.

'I wonder how much your brain would weigh, at a post-mortem examination,' he remarked. 'Didn't I tell you that moving her was the least of two risks? If you want to know what the other risk was, haven't you had my opinion? I have plainly pointed out what the danger is, if Miss Carmina sees your wife on the recovery of her senses. Could we have kept them apart if they had been both in the same house? When I do a thing at my time of life, Mr. Gallilee—don't think me conceited—I know why I do it.'

While he was speaking of himself in these terms, he might have said something more.

He might have added, that his dread of the loss of Carmina's reason really meant his dread of a commonplace termination to an exceptionally interesting case. He might also have acknowledged, that he was not yielding obedience to the rules of professional etiquette, in confiding the patient to her regular medical attendant, but following the suggestions of his own critical judgment. His experience, brief as it had been, had satisfied him that stupid Mr. Null's course of treatment could be trusted to let the instructive progress of the malady proceed. Mr. Null would treat the symptoms in perfect good faith—without a suspicion of the nervous hysteria which, in such a constitution as Carmina's, threatened to establish itself, in course of time, as the hidden cause. These motives of action—not only excused, but ennobled, by their scientific connection with the interests of Medical Research—he might readily have avowed, under more favourable circumstances. With his grand discovery still barely within reach, Doctor Benjulia stood committed, even with simple Mr. Gallilee, to a system of diplomatic reserve.

He took his hat and stick, and walked out into the hall. 'Can I be of any further use?' he asked carelessly. 'You will hear about the patient from Mr. Null.'

'You won't desert poor Carmina?' said Mr. Gallilee. 'You will see her yourself, from time to time—won't you?'

'Don't be afraid; I'll look after her.' He spoke earnestly, in saying this. Carmina's case had already suggested new ideas. Even the civilised savage of modern physiology can sometimes be a grateful man.

Mr. Gallilee opened the door for him.

'By-the-by,' he added as he stepped out, 'what's become of Zo?'

'She's upstairs, in the schoolroom.'

'Tell her, when she wants to be tickled again, to let me know. Good evening.'

Mr. Gallilee returned to the upper part of the house, with the papers left by Benjulia in his hand. Arrived at the dressing-room door, he hesitated. The papers were inclosed in a sealed envelope, addressed to his wife. Secured in this way from inquisitive eyes, there was no necessity for personally presenting them. He went on to the schoolroom, and beckoned to the parlour-maid to come out, and speak to him on the landing.

Having instructed her to deliver the papers—telling her mis-

tress that they had been left at the house by Doctor Benjulia—he dismissed the woman from duty. ‘You needn’t return,’ he said; ‘I’ll look after the children myself.’

Maria was busy with her book; and even idle Zo was employed!

She was writing at the schoolroom desk; and she looked up in confusion, when her father appeared. Unsuspicious Mr. Gallilee took it for granted that his favourite daughter was employed on a writing lesson—following Maria’s industrious example for once. ‘Good children!’ he said, looking affectionately from one to the other. ‘I won’t disturb you; go on.’ He took a chair, satisfied—comforted, even—to be in the same room with the girls.

If he had placed himself nearer to the desk, he might have seen that Zo had been thinking of Carmina to some purpose.

Of the two directed envelopes which Ovid had left for the child on the day of his departure, one still remained. Now and then, she had thought of writing to him again, but her reluctance to encounter the exertion of spelling had prevailed. Zo had been long since reported to be beyond the reach of hope, in this particular. Words of one syllable she had contrived to learn—and there she had stopped. In writing the longer words, she got as far as the first syllable, and left them there in a state of abridgment. Ovid, on this peculiar system, became ‘Ov,’ Miss Minerva shorn of one ‘s’ appeared as ‘Mis Min.’ As for stops and capital letters, she left them to the correcting hand of the governess—admitted, under compulsion, that such things did exist when they were shown to her—and then consigned them to oblivion as soon as the copy-book was closed.

The effect produced on the mind of the child, by the events which had followed Teresa’s arrival, resembled the effect produced on the mind of her father.

Out of her first confusion and terror, one distinct idea emerged—she pitied Carmina with all her heart. By natural association, the desire to help Carmina made itself felt next. Dwelling on these results, Zo’s slowly working mental process, in search of some superior person who might help her—some special and delightful person, who would not say, ‘My dear, this is too serious a matter for a child like you’—arrived at the remembrance of Ovid, and recognised in that good friend and brother the ally of whom she stood in need. With a child’s sensitiveness to ridicule, she remembered that ‘the others had laughed at her’ when she first talked of writing to Ovid. She might perhaps have confided her design to her father, if her small experience had seen him occupying a masterful position in the house. But she had seen him, as everybody else had seen him, ‘afraid of Mama.’ The doubt whether

he might not 'tell Mama' decided her on keeping her secret. As the event proved, the one person who informed Ovid of the terrible necessity that existed for his return was the little sister whom it had been his last kind effort to console when he left England.

When Mr. Gallilee entered the room, Zo had just reached the end of her letter.

*'dear ov you come back car is ill she wants you be quick be quick don't say i writ this mis min is gone I hate books I like you zo.'*

With the pen still in her hand, the wary writer looked round at her father. She had her directed envelope (sadly crumpled) in her pocket; but she was afraid to take it out. Maria, she thought, would know what to do in my place. Horrid Maria!

Fortune, using the affairs of the household as an instrument, befriended Zo. In a minute more her opportunity arrived. The parlour-maid unexpectedly returned. She addressed Mr. Gallilee with the air of mystery in which English servants, in possession of a message, especially delight. 'If you please, sir, Joseph wishes to speak to you.'

'Where is he?'

'Outside, sir.'

'Tell him to come in.'

Thanks to the etiquette of the servants' hall—which did not permit Joseph to present himself, voluntarily, in the regions above the drawing-room, without being first represented by an ambassador—attention was now diverted from the children. Zo folded her letter, inclosed it in the envelope, and hid it in her pocket.

Joseph appeared. 'I beg your pardon, sir, I don't quite know whether I ought to disturb my mistress. Mr. Le Frank has called, and asked if he can see her.'

Mr. Gallilee consulted the parlour-maid. 'Was your mistress asleep when I sent you to her?'

'No, sir. She told me to light the reading-lamp, and to bring her a cup of tea.'

On those rare former occasions when Mrs. Gallilee was ill her attentive husband never left it to the servants to consult her wishes. That time had gone by for ever.

'You can tell your mistress, Joseph, that Mr. Le Frank is here.'

## CHAPTER XLVI.

THE slander on which Mrs. Gallilee had reckoned, as a means of separating Ovid and Carmina, was now a slander refuted by unanswerable proof. And the man whose exertions had achieved this result was her own lawyer—the agent whom she had designed to employ, in asserting that claim of the guardian over the ward which Teresa had defied.

The relations between Mr. Mool and herself were at an end. There she lay helpless—her authority set at naught; her person outraged by a brutal attack—there she lay, urged to action by every reason that a resolute woman could have for asserting her power, and avenging her wrong, without a creature to take her part, without an accomplice to serve her purpose.

She got on her feet, with the resolution of despair. Her heart sank—the room whirled round her—she dropped back on the sofa. In a recumbent position, the giddiness subsided. She could ring the hand-bell on the table at her side. ‘Send instantly for Mr. Null,’ she said to the maid. ‘If he is out, let the messenger follow him, wherever he may be.’

The messenger came back with a note. Mr. Null would call on Mrs. Gallilee as soon as possible. He was then engaged in attendance on Miss Carmina.

At that discovery, Mrs. Gallilee’s last reserves of independent resolution gave way. The services of her own medical attendant were only at her disposal, when Carmina had done with him! The address, which she had thus far tried vainly to discover, stared her in the face at the top of the letter: the house was within five minutes’ walk—and she was not even able to cross the room! For the first time in her life, Mrs. Gallilee’s imperious spirit acknowledged defeat. For the first time in her life, she asked herself the despicable question: Who can I find to help me?

Some one knocked at the door.

‘Who is it?’ she cried.

Joseph’s voice answered her. ‘Mr. Le Frank has called, ma’am—and wishes to know if you can see him.’

She never stopped to think. She never even sent for the maid to see to her personal appearance. The horror of her own helplessness drove her on. Here was the man, whose timely betrayal of Carmina had stopped her on her way to Ovid, in the nick of time! Here was the self-devoted instrument waiting for the passive hand.

‘I’ll see Mr. Le Frank,’ she said. ‘Show him up.’



The music-master looked round the obscurely lit room, and bowed to the recumbent figure on the sofa.

‘I fear I disturb you, madam, at an inconvenient time.’

‘I am suffering from illness, Mr. Le Frank ; but I am able to receive you—as you see.’

She stopped there. Now, when she saw him, and heard him, some perverse hesitation in her began to doubt him. Now, when it was too late, she weakly tried to put herself on her guard. What a decay of energy (she felt it herself) in the ready and resolute woman, equal to any emergency at other times! ‘To what am I to attribute the favour of your visit?’ she resumed.

Even her voice failed her: it faltered in spite of her efforts to steady it. Mr. Le Frank’s mind was already set at ease. His vanity drew its own encouraging conclusion—Mrs. Gallilee was afraid of him.

‘I am anxious to know how I stand in your estimation,’ he replied. ‘Early this evening, I left a few lines here, inclosing a letter—with my compliments. Have you received the letter?’

‘Yes.’

‘Have you read it?’

Mrs. Gallilee hesitated. Mr. Le Frank smiled.

‘I won’t trouble you, madam, for any more direct reply,’ he said; ‘I will speak plainly. Be so good as to tell me plainly, on your side, which I am—a man who has disgraced himself by stealing a letter? or a man who has distinguished himself by doing you a service?’

An unpleasant alternative, neatly defined! To disavow Mr. Le Frank or to use Mr. Le Frank—there was the case for Mrs. Gallilee’s consideration. She was incapable of pronouncing judgment; the mere effort of decision fatigued and irritated her. She could see the position in which she had placed herself—and she could see submission as the easiest way out of it. A mean villain had been admitted to a private interview with her, of her own free will. Why make an enemy of him after that? Why not make use of him? Once more, the intolerable sense of her own helplessness decided her. ‘I can’t deny,’ she said, with weary resignation, ‘that you have done me a service.’

He rose, and made a generous return for the confidence that had been placed in him. In other words, he repeated his magnificent bow.

‘We understand each other,’ he said—and sat down again. ‘If I can be of any further service, madam, in keeping an eye on your niece, trust me.’

‘Is that said, Mr. Le Frank, out of devotion to me?’

'My devotion to you might wear out,' he answered audaciously. 'You may trust my feeling towards your niece to last—I never forget an injury. Is it indiscreet to inquire how you mean to keep Miss Carmina from joining her lover at Quebec? Does a guardian's authority extend to locking a young lady up in her room?'

Mrs. Gallilee felt the underlying familiarity in these questions—elaborately concealed as it was under an assumption of respect.

'My niece is no longer in my house,' she answered coldly.

'Gone!' cried Mr. Le Frank.

She corrected the expression. 'Removed,' she said, and dropped the subject there.

Mr. Le Frank took the subject up again. 'Removed, I presume, under the care of her nurse?' he rejoined.

The nurse? What did he know about the nurse? 'May I ask——' Mrs. Gallilee began.

He smiled indulgently, and stopped her there. 'You are not quite yourself to-night,' he said. 'Permit me to remind you that your niece's letter to Mr. Ovid Vere is explicit, and that I took the liberty of reading it before I left it at your house.'

Mrs. Gallilee listened in silence, conscious that she had committed another error. She had carefully excluded from her confidence a man who was already in possession of her secrets! Mr. Le Frank's courteous sympathy forbade him to take advantage of the position of superiority which he now held.

'I will do myself the honour of calling again,' he said, 'when you are better able to place the right estimate on my humble offers of service. I wouldn't fatigue you, Mrs. Gallilee, for the world! At the same time, permit me to put one last question which ought not to be delayed. When Miss Carmina left you, did she take away her writing-desk and her keys?'

'No.'

'Allow me to suggest that she may send for them at any moment.'

Before it was possible to ask for an explanation, Joseph presented himself again. Mr. Null was waiting downstairs. Mrs. Gallilee arranged that he should be admitted when she rang her bell. Mr. Le Frank approached the sofa, when they were alone, and returned to his suggestion in a whisper.

'Mrs. Gallilee! there may be discoveries to be made, among your niece's papers, of the last importance to your interests. We don't know what correspondence may have been going on, in which the nurse and the governess have been concerned. After we have already intercepted a letter, hesitation is absurd! You are not equal to the effort yourself. I know the room. (Don't be

afraid of discovery; I have a naturally soft footfall—and my excuse is ready, if somebody else has a soft footfall too. Leave it to me.'

He lit a candle as he spoke. But for that allusion to the nurse, Mrs. Gallilee might have ordered him to blow it out again. 'I'll call to-morrow,' he said, without troubling her to reply—and slipped out of the room.

At the moment when Mr. Null was announced, Mrs. Gallilee pushed up the shade over the globe of the lamp. She had her own reasons for wanting a little more light.

His timid look, his confused manner, when he made the conventional apologies, told her at once that Teresa had spoken, and that he knew what had happened. Even he had never before been so soothing and so attentive. But he forgot, or he was afraid, to consult appearances by asking what was the matter, before he felt the pulse, and took the temperature, and wrote his prescription. Not a word was uttered by Mrs. Gallilee, until the medical formalities came to an end. 'Is there anything more that I can do?' he asked.

'You can tell me,' she said, 'when I shall be well again.'

Mr. Null was polite; Mr. Null was sympathetic. Mrs. Gallilee might be herself again in a day or two—or Mrs. Gallilee might be unhappily confined to her room for some little time. He had hope in his prescription, and hope in perfect quiet and repose—he would suggest the propriety of going to bed at once, and would not fail to call early the next morning.

'Sit down again,' said Mrs. Gallilee.

Mr. Null turned pale, and obeyed. He foresaw what was coming.

'You have been in attendance on Miss Carmina. I wish to know what her illness is.'

Mr. Null began to prevaricate at the outset. 'The case causes us serious anxiety. The complications are formidable. Doctor Benjulia himself——'

'In plain words, Mr. Null, can she be moved?'

This produced a definite answer. 'Quite impossible.'

She only ventured to put her next question after waiting a little to control herself.

'Is that foreign woman, the nurse—the only nurse—in attendance?'

'Don't speak of her, Mrs. Gallilee! A dreadful woman; coarse, furious, a perfect savage. When I suggested a second nurse——'

'I understand. You asked just now if you could do anything for me. You can do me a great service—you can recommend me a trustworthy lawyer.'

Mr. Null was surprised. As the old medical attendant of the family, he was not unacquainted with the legal adviser. He mentioned Mr. Mool's name.

'Mr. Mool has forfeited my confidence,' Mrs. Gallilee announced. 'Can you, or can you not, recommend a lawyer?'

'Oh, certainly! My own lawyer.'

'You will find writing materials on the table behind me. I won't keep you more than five minutes. I want you to write from my dictation.'

'My dear lady, in your present condition——'

'Do as I tell you! My head is quiet while I lie down. Even a woman in my condition can say what she means to do. I shall not close my eyes to-night, unless I can feel that I have put that wretch in her right place. Who are your lawyers?'

Mr. Null mentioned the names, and took up his pen.

'Introduce me in the customary form,' Mrs. Gallilee proceeded; 'and then refer the lawyers either to Mr. Mool, or to the Will of the late Mr. Robert Graywell, if I must prove that I am the guardian. Is it done?'

In due time it was done.

'Tell them next, how my niece has been taken away from me, and where she has been taken to.'

To the best of his ability, Mr. Null complied.

'Now,' said Mrs. Gallilee, 'write what I mean to do!'

The prospect of being revenged on Teresa revived her. For the moment at least, she looked, she spoke, like herself again.

Mr. Null turned over to a new leaf, with a hand that trembled a little. The dictating voice pronounced these words:—

'In the exercise of my authority, I forbid the woman Teresa to act in the capacity of nurse to Miss Carmina, and even to enter the room in which that young lady is now lying ill. I further warn this person, that my niece will be restored to my care, the moment her medical attendants allow her to be removed. And I desire my legal advisers to act on these instructions to-morrow morning.'

Mr. Null finished his task in silent dismay. He took out his handkerchief and wiped his forehead.

'Is there any very terrible effort required in saying those few words—even to a shattered creature like me?' Mrs. Gallilee asked bitterly. 'Let me hear that the lawyers have got their instructions, when you come to-morrow morning. Good night.'

At last, Mr. Null got away. As he softly closed the dressing-room door, the serious question still dwelt on his mind: What would Teresa do?

## CHAPTER XLVII.

EVEN in the welcome retirement of the schoolroom, Mr. Gallilee's mind was not at ease. He was troubled by a question entirely new to him—the question of himself, in the character of husband and father. Accustomed through long years of conjugal association to look up to his wife as a superior creature, he was now conscious that her place in his estimation had been lost, beyond recovery. If he considered next what ought to be done with Maria and Zo, he only renewed his perplexity and distress. To leave them (as he had hitherto left them) absolutely submitted to their mother's authority, was to resign his children to the influence of a woman, who had ceased to be the object of his confidence and respect. He pondered over it in the schoolroom; he pondered over it when he went to bed. On the next morning, he arrived at a conclusion in the nature of a compromise. He decided on applying to his good friend, Mr. Mool, for a word of advice.

His first proceeding was to call at Teresa's lodgings, in the hope of hearing better news of Carmina. The melancholy report of her was expressed in two words: No change. He was so distressed that he asked to see the landlady; and tried, in his own helpless, kindhearted way, to get a little hopeful information by asking questions—useless questions, repeated over and over again in futile changes of words. The landlady was patient: she respected the undisguised grief of the gentle modest old man; but she held to the hard truth. The one possible answer was the answer which her servant had already given. When she followed him out, to open the door, Mr. Gallilee requested permission to wait a moment in the hall. 'If you will allow me, ma'am, I'll wipe my eyes before I go into the street.'

Arriving at the office without an appointment, he found Mr. Mool engaged. A clerk presented to him a slip of paper, with a line written by Mr. Mool: 'Is it anything of importance?' Simple Mr. Gallilee wrote back: 'Oh dear no; it's only me: I'll call again.' Besides his critical judgment in the matter of champagne, this excellent man possessed another accomplishment—a beautiful handwriting. Mr. Mool, discovering a crooked line and some ill-formed letters in the reply, drew his own conclusions. He sent word to his old friend to wait.

In ten minutes more they were together, and the lawyer was informed of the events that had followed the visit of Benjulia on the previous day.

For a while, the two men sat silently meditating—daunted by

the prospect before them. When the time came for speaking, they exercised an influence over each other, of which both were alike unconscious. Out of their common horror of Mrs. Gallilee's conduct, and their common interest in Carmina, they innocently achieved between them the creation of one resolute man.

'My dear Gallilee, this is a very serious thing.'

'My dear Mool, I feel it so—or I shouldn't have disturbed you.'

'Don't talk of disturbing me! I see so many complications ahead of us, I hardly know where to begin.'

'Just my case! It's a comfort to me that you feel it as I do.'

Mr. Mool rose and tried walking up and down his room, as a means of stimulating his ingenuity.

'There's this poor young lady,' he resumed. 'If she gets better——'

'Don't put it in that way!' Mr. Gallilee interposed. 'It sounds as if you doubted her ever getting well—you see it yourself in that light, don't you? Be a little more positive, Mool, in mercy to me.'

'By all means,' Mr. Mool agreed. 'Let us say, *when* she gets better. But the difficulty meets us, all the same. If Mrs. Gallilee claims her right, what are we to do?'

Mr. Gallilee rose in his turn, and took a walk up and down the room. That well-meant experiment only left him feebler than ever.

'What possessed her brother to make her Carmina's guardian?' he asked—with the nearest approach to irritability of which he was capable.

The lawyer was busy with his own thoughts. He only enlightened Mr. Gallilee after the question had been repeated.

'I had the sincerest regard for Mr. Robert Graywell,' he said. 'A better husband and father—and don't let me forget it, a more charming artist—never lived. But,' said Mr. Mool, with the air of one strong-minded man appealing to another, 'weak, sadly weak. If you will allow me to say so, your wife's self-asserting way—well! it was so unlike her brother's way, that it had its effect on him. If Lady Northlake had been a little less quiet and retiring, the matter might have ended in a very different manner. As it was (I don't wish to put the case offensively), Mrs. Gallilee imposed on him—and there she is, in authority, under the Will. Let that be. We must protect this poor girl. We must act!' cried Mr. Mool with a burst of energy.

'We must act!' Mr. Gallilee repeated—and feebly clenched his fist, and softly struck the table.

'I think I have an idea,' the lawyer resumed; 'suggested by something said to me by Miss Carmina herself. May I ask if you are in her confidence?'

Mr. Gallilee's face brightened at this. 'Certainly,' he answered. 'I always kiss her when we say good-night, and kiss her again when we say good morning.'

This proof of his friend's claims as Carmina's chosen adviser, seemed rather to puzzle Mr. Mool. 'Did she ever hint at an idea of hastening her marriage?' he inquired.

Plainly as the question was put, it thoroughly puzzled Mr. Gallilee. His honest face answered for him—he was *not* in Carmina's confidence.

'The one thing we can do,' Mr. Mool proceeded, 'is to hasten Mr. Ovid's return. There is my idea.'

'Let's do it at once!' cried Mr. Gallilee.

'But tell me,' Mr. Mool insisted, greedy for encouragement—'does my suggestion relieve your mind?'

'It's the first happy moment I've had to-day!' Mr. Gallilee's weak voice piped high: he was getting firmer and firmer with every word he uttered.

One of them produced a telegraph-form; the other seized a pen. 'Shall we send the message in your name?' Mr. Mool asked.

If Mr. Gallilee had possessed a hundred names he would have sent them (and paid for them) all. 'John Gallilee, 14 Fairfield Gardens, London, To ——' There the pen stopped. Ovid was still in the wilds of Canada. The one way of communicating with him was through the medium of the bankers at Quebec. To the bankers, accordingly, the message was sent. 'Please telegraph Mr. Ovid Vere's address, the moment you know it.'

When the telegram had been sent to the office, an interval of inaction followed. Mr. Gallilee's fortitude suffered a relapse. 'It's a long time to wait,' he said.

His friend agreed with him. Morally speaking, Mr. Mool's strength lay in points of law. No point of law appeared to be involved in the present conference: he shared Mr. Gallilee's depression of spirits. 'We are quite helpless,' he remarked, 'till Mr. Ovid comes back. In the interval, I see no choice for Miss Carmina but to submit to her guardian; unless——' He looked hard at Mr. Gallilee, before he finished his sentence. 'Unless,' he resumed, 'you can get over your present feeling about your wife.'

'Get over it?' Mr. Gallilee repeated.

'It seems quite impossible now, I dare say,' the worthy lawyer

admitted. 'A very painful impression has been produced on you. Naturally! naturally! But the force of habit—a married life of many years—your own kind feeling—'

'What do you mean?' asked Mr. Gallilee, bewildered, impatient, almost angry.

'A little persuasion on your part, my good friend—at the interesting moment of reconciliation—might be followed by excellent results. Mrs. Gallilee might not object to waive her claims, until time has softened existing asperities. Surely, a compromise is possible, if you could only prevail on yourself to forgive your wife.'

'Forgive her? I should be only too glad to forgive her!' cried Mr. Gallilee, bursting into violent agitation. 'How am I to do it? Good God, Mool, how am I to do it! *You* didn't hear those infamous words. *You* didn't see that dreadful death-struck look of the poor girl. I declare to you I turn cold when I think of my wife! I have sent the servants into her room, when I ought to have gone to her myself. My children, too—my dear good children—I'm heart-broken when I think of their being brought up by a mother who could say what she has said, and do—What will they see, I ask you what will they see, if she gets Carmina back in the house, and treats that sweet young creature as she *will* treat her? There were times last night, when I thought of going away for ever—Lord knows where—and taking the girls with me. What am I talking about? I had something to say, and I don't know what it is; I don't know my own self! There, there; I'll keep quiet. It's my poor stupid head, I suppose—hot, Mool, burning hot. Let's be reasonable. Yes, yes, yes; let's be reasonable. You're a lawyer. I said to myself, when I came here, "I want Mool's advice." Be a dear good fellow—set my mind at ease. What can I do for my children?'

Amazed and distressed—utterly at a loss how to interfere to any good purpose—Mr. Mool recovered his presence of mind, the moment his friend appealed to him in his legal capacity. He took the right means of quieting Mr. Gallilee, by instinct. 'Don't distress yourself about your children,' he said kindly. 'Thank God, we stand on firm ground, there.'

'Do you mean it, Mool?'

'I mean it. Where your daughters are concerned, the authority is yours. Be firm, Gallilee! be firm!'

'I will! You set me the example—don't you? *You're* firm—eh?'

'Firm as a rock. I agree with you. For the present at least, the children must be removed.'



‘At once, Mool!’

‘At once!’ the lawyer repeated.

They had wrought each other up to the right pitch of resolution, by this time. They were almost loud enough for the clerks to hear them in the office.

‘No matter what my wife may say!’ Mr. Gallilee stipulated.

‘No matter what she may say,’ Mr. Mool rejoined, ‘the father is master.’

‘And *you* know the law.’

‘And I know the law. You have only to assert yourself.’

‘And *you* have only to back me.’

‘For your children’s sake, Gallilee!’

‘Under my lawyer’s advice, Mool!’

The one resolute Man was produced at last—without a flaw in him anywhere. They were both exhausted by the effort. Mr. Mool suggested a glass of wine.

Mr. Gallilee ventured on a hint. ‘You don’t happen to have a drop of champagne handy?’ he said.

The lawyer rang for his housekeeper. In five minutes they were pledging each other in foaming tumblers. In five minutes more they plunged back into business. The question of the best place to which the children could be removed was easily settled. Mr. Mool offered his own house; acknowledging modestly that it had perhaps one drawback—it was within easy reach of Mrs. Gallilee. The statement of this objection stimulated his friend’s memory. Lady Northlake was in Scotland. Lady Northlake had invited Maria and Zo, over and over again, to pass the autumn with their cousins; but Mrs. Gallilee’s jealousy had always contrived to find some plausible reason for refusal. ‘Write at once,’ Mr. Mool advised. ‘You may do it in two lines. Your wife is ill; Miss Carmina is ill; you are not able to leave London—and the children are pining for fresh air.’ In this sense, Mr. Gallilee wrote. He insisted on having the letter sent to the post immediately. ‘I know it’s long before post-time,’ he explained. ‘But I want to compose my mind.’

The lawyer paused, with his glass of wine at his lips. ‘I say! You’re not hesitating already?’

‘No more than you are,’ Mr. Gallilee answered.

‘You will really send the girls away?’

‘The girls shall go, on the day when Lady Northlake invites them.’

‘I’ll make a note of that,’ said Mr. Mool.

He made the note; and they rose to say good-bye. Faithful

Mr. Gallilee still thought of Carmina. 'Do consider it again!' he said at parting. 'Are you sure the law won't help her?'

'I might look at her father's Will,' Mr. Mool replied.

Mr. Gallilee saw the hopeful side of this suggestion, in the brightest colours. 'Why didn't you think of it before?' he asked.

Mr. Mool gently remonstrated. 'Don't forget how many things I have on my mind,' he said. 'It only occurs to me now, that the Will may give us a remedy—if there is any *open* opposition to the ward's marriage engagement, on the guardian's part.'

There he stopped; knowing Mrs. Gallilee's methods of opposition too well to reckon hopefully on such a result as this. But he was a merciful man—and he kept his misgivings to himself.

On the way home, Mr. Gallilee encountered his wife's maid. She was dropping a letter into the pillar-post-box at the corner of the square; and she changed colour, on seeing her master. 'Corresponding with her sweetheart,' Mr. Gallilee concluded.

Entering the house with an unfinished cigar in his mouth, he made straight for the smoking-room—and passed his youngest daughter, below him, waiting out of sight on the kitchen stairs.

'Have you done it?' Zo whispered, when the maid returned by the servants' entrance.

'It's safe in the post, dear.' She looked into the pantry—satisfied herself that it was empty at the time—and beckoned to Zo. 'Now tell me what you saw yesterday,' she said, 'when you were hidden in Miss Carmina's bedroom.'

The tone in which she spoke implied a confidential agreement. Burning with curiosity to know what had happened; on the previous evening, Mrs. Gallilee's maid had secured the goodwill of the only available witness. She had served Zo's epistolary interests in the strictest secrecy; paying for a foreign postage stamp out of her own pocket. With honourable promptitude, Zo perched on her friend's knee, exerted her memory, and returned the obligation.

## CHAPTER XLVIII.

It was past the middle of the day, before Mr. Le Frank paid his promised visit to Mrs. Gallilee. He entered the room with gloomy looks; and made his polite inquiries, as became a depressed musician, in the minor key.

'I am sorry, madam, to find you still on the sofa. Is there no improvement in your health?'

'None whatever.'

'Does your medical attendant give you any hope?'

'He does what they all do—he preaches patience. No more of myself! You appear to be in depressed spirits.'

Mr. Le Frank admitted with a sigh that appearances had not misrepresented him. 'I have been bitterly disappointed,' he said. 'My feelings as an artist are wounded to the quick. But why do I trouble you with my poor little personal affairs? I humbly beg your pardon.'

His eyes accompanied this modest apology with a look of uneasy anticipation: he evidently expected to be asked to explain himself. Earlier in the day events had happened which left Mrs. Gallilee in need of employing Mr. Le Frank's services. She felt the necessity of exerting herself; and did it—with an effort.

'You have no reason, I hope, to complain of your pupils?' she said.

'At this time of year, madam, I have no pupils. They are all out of town.'

She was too deeply preoccupied by her own affairs to trouble herself any further. The direct way was the easy way. She said wearily, 'Well, what is it?'

He answered in plain terms, this time.

'A bitter humiliation, Mrs. Gallilee! I have been made to regret that I asked you to honour me by accepting the dedication of my Song. The music-sellers, on whom the sale depends, have not taken a tenth part of the number of copies for which we expected them to subscribe. Has some extraordinary change come over the public taste? My composition has been carefully based on fashionable principles—that is to say, on the principles of the modern German school. As little tune as possible; and that little strictly confined to the accompaniment. And what is the result? Loss confronts me, instead of profit—my agreement makes me liable for half the expenses of publication. And, what is far more serious in my estimation, your honoured name is associated with a failure! Don't notice me—the artist nature—I shall be better in a minute.' He took out a profusely scented handkerchief, and buried his face in it with a groan.

Mrs. Gallilee's hard common-sense understood the heart-broken composer to perfection.

'Stupid of me not to have offered him money yesterday,' she thought: 'this waste of time need never have happened.' She set her mistake right with admirable brevity and directness. 'Don't distress yourself, Mr. Le Frank. Now my name is on it, the Song is mine. If your publisher's account is not satisfactory—be so good as to send it to *me*.' Mr. Le Frank dropped his dry handkerchief, and sprang theatrically to his feet. His indulgent patroness refused to hear him: to this admirable woman, the dignity of Art was a sacred thing. 'Not a word more on that subject,'

she said. 'Tell me how you prospered last night. Your investigations cannot have been interrupted, or I should have heard of it. Come to the result! Have you found anything of importance in my niece's room?'

Mr. Le Frank understood the situation; and made himself the hero of it, in three words. 'Judge for yourself,' he said—and presented a letter to Mrs. Gallilee.

It was the warning from Father Patrizio.

In silence, Mrs. Gallilee read the words which informed Carmina of the serious necessity of controlling the nurse. In silence, she dropped the letter on her lap.

'Does it alarm you?' Mr. Le Frank asked.

'It stuns me,' she said faintly. 'Give me time to think.'

Mr. Le Frank went back to his chair. He had reason to congratulate himself already: he had shifted to other shoulders the pecuniary responsibility, involved in the failure of his Song. Observing Mrs. Gallilee, he began to see possibilities of a brighter prospect still. Thus far she had kept him at a certain distance. Was the change of mind coming, which would admit him to the position of a confidential friend?

She suddenly took up the letter, and showed it to him.

'What impression does it produce on you,' she asked, 'knowing no more than you know now?'

'The priest's cautious language, madam, speaks for itself. You have an enemy who will stick at nothing.'

She still hesitated to trust him.

'You see me here,' she went on, 'confined to my room; likely, perhaps, to be in this helpless condition for some time to come. How would you protect yourself against that woman, in my place?'

'I should wait.'

'For what purpose?'

'If you will allow me to use the language of the card table, I should wait till the woman shows her hand.'

'She *has* shown it.'

'May I ask when?'

'This morning.'

Mr. Le Frank said no more. If he was really wanted, Mrs. Gallilee had only to speak. After a last moment of hesitation, the pitiless necessities of her position decided her once more. 'You see me too ill to move,' she said; 'the first thing to do, is to tell you why.'

She related the plain facts; without a word of comment, without a sign of emotion. But her husband's horror of her had left

an impression which neither pride nor contempt had been strong enough to resist. She allowed the music-master to infer that contending claims to authority over Carmina had led to a quarrel which provoked the assault. The secret of the words that she had spoken was the one secret that she kept from Mr. Le Frank.

'While I was insensible,' she proceeded, 'my niece was taken away from me. She has been suffering from nervous illness; she was naturally terrified—and she is now at the nurse's lodgings, too ill to be moved. There you have the state of affairs, up to last night.'

'Some people might think,' Mr. Le Frank remarked, 'that the easiest way out of it, so far, would be to summon the nurse for the assault.'

'The easiest way compels me to face a public exposure,' Mrs. Gallilee answered. 'In my position that is impossible.'

Mr. Le Frank accepted this view of the case as a matter of course. 'Under the circumstances,' he said, 'it's not easy to advise you. How can you make the woman submit to your authority, while you are lying here?'

'My lawyers have made her submit this morning.'

In the extremity of his surprise, Mr. Le Frank forgot himself. 'The devil they have!' he exclaimed.

'They have forbidden her, in my name,' Mrs. Gallilee continued, 'to act as nurse to my niece. They have informed her that Miss Carmina will be restored to my care, the moment she can be moved. And they have sent me her unconditional submission in writing, signed by herself.'

She took it from the desk at her side, and read it to him, in these words:—

'I humbly ask pardon of Mrs. Gallilee for the violent and unlawful acts of which I have been guilty. I acknowledge, and submit to, her authority as guardian of Miss Carmina Graywell. And I appeal to her mercy (which I own I have not deserved) to spare me the misery of separation from Miss Carmina, on any conditions which it may be her good will and pleasure to impose.'

'Now,' Mrs. Gallilee concluded, 'what do you say?'

Speaking sincerely for once, Mr. Le Frank made a startling reply.

'Submit on your side,' he said. 'Do what she asks of you. And when you are well enough to go to her lodgings, decline with thanks if she offers you anything to eat or drink.'

Mrs. Gallilee raised herself on the sofa. 'Are you insulting me, sir,' she asked, 'by making this serious emergency the subject of a joke?'

'I never was more in earnest, madam, in my life.'

'You think—you really think—that she is capable of trying to poison me?'

'Most assuredly I do.'

Mrs. Gallilee sank back on the pillow. Mr. Le Frank stated his reasons; checking them off one by one, on his fingers.

'Who is she?' he began. 'She is an Italian woman of the lower orders. The virtues of the people among whom she has been born and bred are not generally considered to include respect for the sanctity of human life. What do we know already that she has done? She has alarmed the priest, who keeps her conscience, and knows her well; and she has attacked you with such murderous ferocity that it is a wonder you have escaped with your life. What sort of message have you sent to her, after this experience of her temper? You have told the tigress that you have the power to separate her from her cub, and that you mean to use it. On those plain facts, as they stare us in the face, which is the soundest conclusion? To believe that she submits, now you have brought her to bay—or to believe that she is only gaining time, and is capable (if she sees no other alternative) of trying to poison you?'

'What am I to do?' In those words Mrs. Gallilee owned that sound reasoning was not thrown away on her.

'Keep a wary eye on the enemy,' Mr. Le Frank answered. 'Have all her movements privately watched—and search the room she lives in, as I searched Miss Carmina's room last night.'

'Well?' said Mrs. Gallilee.

'Well?' Mr. Le Frank repeated.

She angrily gave way. 'Say at once that you are the man to do it for me!' she answered. 'And say next—if you can—how it is to be done.'

Mr. Le Frank's manner softened to an air of gentle gallantry.

'Pray compose yourself!' he said. 'I am so glad to be of service to you, and it is so easily done!'

'Easily?'

'Dear madam, quite easily. Isn't the house a lodging-house? and, at this time of year, have I anything to do?' He rose, and took his hat. 'Surely, you see me in my new character now? A single gentleman wants a bedroom. His habits are quiet, and he gives excellent references. The address, Mrs. Gallilee—may I trouble you for the address?'

## CHAPTER XLIX.

TOWARDS seven o'clock on the evening of Thursday, Carmina recognised Teresa for the first time.

Her half-closed eyes opened, as if from a long sleep: they rested on the old nurse without any appearance of surprise. 'I am so glad to see you, my dear,' she said faintly. 'Are you very tired after your journey?' None of the inquiries which might have been anticipated followed those first words. Not the slightest allusion to Mrs. Gallilee escaped her; she expressed no anxiety about Miss Minerva; no sign of uneasiness at finding herself in a strange room disturbed her quiet face. Contentedly reposing, she looked at Teresa from time to time and said, 'You will stay with me, won't you?' Now and then, she confessed that her head felt dull and heavy, and asked Teresa to take her hand. 'I feel as if I was sinking away from you,' she said; 'keep hold of my hand, and I shan't be afraid to go to sleep.' The words were hardly spoken, before she sank into slumber. Occasionally, Teresa felt her hand tremble, and kissed it. She seemed to be conscious of the kiss, without waking—she smiled in her sleep.

But, when the first hours of the morning came, this state of passive repose was disturbed. A violent attack of sickness came on. It was repeated again and again. Teresa sent for Mr. Null. He did what he could to relieve the new symptom; and he despatched a messenger to his illustrious colleague.

Benjulia lost no time in answering personally the appeal that had been made to him.

Mr. Null said, 'Serious derangement of the stomach, sir.' Benjulia agreed with him. Mr. Null showed his prescription. Benjulia sanctioned the prescription. Mr. Null said, 'Is there anything you wish to suggest, sir?' Benjulia had nothing to suggest.

He waited, nevertheless, until Carmina was able to speak to him. Teresa and Mr. Null wondered what he would say to her. He only said, 'Do you remember when you last saw me?' After a little consideration, she answered, 'Yes, Zo was with us; Zo brought in your big stick; and we talked——' She tried to rouse her memory. 'What did we talk about?' she asked. A momentary agitation brought a flush to her face. 'I can't remember it,' she said; 'I can't remember when you went away: does it matter?' Benjulia replied, 'Not the least in the world. Go to sleep.'

But he still remained in the room—watching her as she grew

drowsy. 'Great weakness,' Mr. Null whispered. And Benjulia answered, 'Yes; I'll call again.'

On his way out, he took Teresa aside.

'No more questions,' he said—'and don't help her memory if she asks you.'

'Will she remember, when she gets better?' Teresa inquired.

'Impossible to say, yet. Wait and see.'

He was in a hurry to get home again: his experiments were waiting for him. 'A puzzling case—so far,' he concluded, thinking of Carmina. 'Not at all like the dog,' he reminded himself, thinking of his experiments. He was so uneasy about the dog, that he ran to the laboratory on reaching his house. Nothing had gone wrong on the operating table in his absence. The poor suffering creature feebly moved its tail, feebly tried to lick the cruel hand that had so cleverly injured its brain. Benjulia held up the dog's face, studied it intently, and laid it back on the table. His mind reverted to Carmina's case. Some hidden process was at work there: give it time—and it would show itself. 'I hope that ass won't want me,' he said, thinking of his medical colleague, 'for at least a week to come.'

The week passed—and the physiologist was not disturbed.

During that interval, Mr. Null succeeded in partially overcoming the attacks of sickness: they were less violent, and they were succeeded by longer intervals of repose. In other respects, there seemed (as Teresa persisted in thinking) to be some little promise of improvement. A certain mental advance was unquestionably noticeable in Carmina. It first showed itself in an interesting way: she began to speak of Ovid.

Her great anxiety was, that he should know nothing of her illness. She forbade Teresa to write to him; she sent messages to Mr. and Mrs. Gallilee, and even to Mr. Mool, entreating them to preserve silence.

The nurse engaged to deliver the messages—and failed to keep her word. This breach of promise (as events had ordered it) proved to be harmless. Mrs. Gallilee had good reasons for not writing. Her husband and Mr. Mool had decided on sending their telegram to the bankers. As for Teresa herself, she had no desire to communicate with Ovid. His absence—no matter how imperatively it had been forced upon him by the state of his health—remained inexcusable, from her point of view. Well or ill, with or without reason, it was the nurse's opinion that he ought to have remained at home, in Carmina's interests. No other persons were in the least likely to write to Ovid—nobody thought of Zo as a correspondent—Carmina was pacified.



Once or twice, at this later time, the languid efforts of her memory took a wider range.

She wondered why Mrs. Gallilee never came near her; owning that her aunt's absence was a relief to her, but not feeling interest enough in the subject to ask for information. She also mentioned Miss Minerva. 'Do you know where she has gone? Don't you think she ought to write to me?' Teresa offered to make inquiries. She turned her head wearily on the pillow, and said, 'Never mind!' On another occasion, she asked for Zo, and said it would be pleasant if Mr. Gallilee would call and bring her with him. But she soon dropped the subject, not to return to it again.

The only remembrance which seemed to dwell on her mind for more than a few minutes was her remembrance of the last letter which she had written to Ovid.

She pleased herself with imagining his surprise when he received it; she grew impatient under her continued illness, because it delayed her in escaping to Canada; she talked to Teresa of the clever manner in which the flight had been planned—with this strange failure of memory, that she attributed the various arrangements for setting discovery at defiance, not to Miss Minerva, but to the nurse. Here, for the first time, her mind was approaching dangerous ground. The stealing of the letter, and the events that had followed it, stood next in the order of remembrance—if she was capable of a continued effort. Her weakness saved her. Beyond the writing of the letter, her recollections were unable to advance. Not the faintest allusion to any later circumstances escaped her. The poor stricken brain still sought its rest in frequent intervals of sleep. Sometimes, she drifted back into partial unconsciousness; sometimes the attacks of sickness returned. Mr. Null set an excellent example of patience and resignation. He believed as devoutly as ever in his prescriptions; he placed the greatest reliance on time and care. The derangement of the stomach (as he called it) presented something positive and tangible to treat: he had got over the doubts and anxieties that troubled him, when Carmina was first removed to the lodgings. Looking confidently at the surface—without an idea of what was going on below it—he could tell Teresa, with a safe conscience, that he understood the case. He was always ready to comfort her, when her excitable Italian nature passed from the extreme of hope to the extreme of despair. 'My good woman, we see our way now: it's a great point gained, I assure you, to see our way.'

'What do you mean by seeing your way?' said the downright nurse. 'Tell me when Carmina will be well again.'

Mr. Null's medical knowledge was not yet equal to this demand

on it. 'The progress is slow,' he admitted; 'still Miss Carmina is getting on.'

'Is her aunt getting on?' Teresa asked abruptly. 'When is Mistress Gallilee likely to come here?'

'In a few days——' Mr. Null was about to add 'I hope,' but he thought of what might happen when the two women met. As it was, Teresa's face showed signs of serious disturbance: her mind was plainly not prepared for this speedy prospect of a visit from Mrs. Gallilee. She took a letter out of her pocket.

'I find a good deal of sly prudence in you,' she said to Mr. Null. 'You must have seen something in your time of the ways of deceitful English women. What does that palaver mean in plain words?' She handed the letter to him.

With some reluctance he read it.

'Mrs. Gallilee declines to contract any engagement with the person formerly employed as nurse, in the household of the late Mr. Robert Graywell. Mrs. Gallilee so far recognises the apology and submission offered to her as to abstain from taking immediate proceedings. In arriving at this decision, she is also influenced by the necessity of sparing her niece any agitation which might interfere with the medical treatment. When the circumstances appear to require it, she will not hesitate to exert her authority.'

The handwriting told Mr. Null that this manifesto had not been written by Mrs. Gallilee herself. The person who had succeeded him in the capacity of that lady's amanuensis had been also a person capable of giving sound advice. Little did he suspect that this mysterious secretary was identical with an enterprising pianist who had once prevailed on him to take a seat at a concert—price five shillings.

'Well?' said Teresa.

Mr. Null hesitated.

The nurse stamped impatiently on the floor. 'Tell me this! When she does come here, will she part me from Carmina? Is that what she means?'

'Possibly,' said prudent Mr. Null.

Teresa pointed to the door. 'Good morning. I want nothing more of you. Oh, man, man, leave me by myself!'

The moment she was alone, she fell on her knees. Fiercely whispering, she repeated over and over again the words of The Lord's Prayer: 'Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Christ, hear me! Mother of Christ, hear me! Oh, Carmina! Carmina!'

She rose and opened the door which communicated with the bedroom. Trembling pitifully, she looked for a while at Carmina,

peacefully asleep—then turned away to a corner of the room, in which stood a wooden box. She took it up; and, returning with it to the sitting-room, softly closed the bedroom door again.

After some hesitation, she proceeded to open the box. In the terror and confusion that possessed her, she tried the wrong key. Setting this mistake right, she disclosed—strangely mingled with the lighter articles of her own dress—a heap of papers; some of them letters and bills; some of them faded instructions in writing for the preparation of artists' colours.]

She recoiled from the open box. Why had she not taken Father Patrizio's advice? If she had only waited another day; if she had only sorted her husband's papers, before she threw the things that her trunk was too full to hold into that half-empty box, what torment might have been spared to her! Her eyes turned mournfully to the bedroom door. 'Oh, my darling, I was in such a hurry to get to You!'

At last she controlled herself, and put her hand into the box. Searching it to the bottom, she produced a little tin canister. A dirty label was pasted on the canister, bearing this quaint inscription in the Italian language:—

'If there is any of the powder we employ in making some of our prettiest colours left in here, I request my good wife, or any other trustworthy person in her place, to put a seal on it, and take it directly to the manufactory, with the late foreman's best respects. It looks like nice sugar. Beware of looks—or you may taste poison.'

On the point of opening the canister she hesitated. Under some strange impulse, she did what a child might have done: she shook it, and listened.

The rustle of the rising and falling powder—renewing her terror—seemed to exercise some irresistible fascination over her. 'The devil's dance,' she said to herself, with a ghastly smile. 'Softly up—and softly down—and tempting me to take off the cover all the time! Why don't I get rid of it?'

That question set her thinking of Carmina's guardian. If Mr. Null was right, in a day or two Mrs. Gallilee might come to the house. After the lawyers had threatened Teresa with the dreadful prospect of separation from Carmina, she had examined the box for the first time—seeking the nearest means of relief from her own thoughts—and had discovered the canister. The sight of the deadly powder had tempted her. There were the horrid means of setting Mrs. Gallilee's authority at defiance! Some women, in her place, would use them. Though she was not looking into the canister now, she felt that thought stealing back

into her mind. There was but one hope for her: she resolved to get rid of the poison. How?

At that period of the year there was no fire in the grate. Within the limits of the room, the means of certain destruction were slow to present themselves. Her own morbid horror of the canister made her suspicious of the curiosity of other people, who might see it in her hand if she showed herself on the stairs. But she was determined, if she lit a fire for the purpose, to find the way to her end. The firmness of her resolution expressed itself by locking the box again, without restoring the canister to its hiding-place.

Providing herself next with a knife, she sat down in a corner—between the bedroom door on one side, and a cupboard in an angle of the wall on the other—and began the work of destruction by scraping off the paper label. The fragments might be burnt, and the powder (if she made a vow to the Virgin to do it) might be thrown into the fire next—and then the empty canister would be harmless.

She had made but little progress in the work of scraping, when it occurred to her that the lighting of a fire, on that warm autumn day, might look suspicious if the landlady or Mr. Null happened to come in. It would be safer to wait till night-time, when everybody would be in bed.

Arriving at this conclusion, she mechanically suspended the use of her knife. In the moment of silence that followed, she heard some one enter the bedroom by the door which opened on the stairs. Immediately afterwards, the person turned the handle of the second door at her side. She had barely time enough to open the cupboard, and hide the canister in it—when the landlady came in.

Teresa looked at her wildly. The landlady looked at the cupboard: she was proud of her cupboard.

‘Plenty of room there,’ she said boastfully; ‘not another house in the neighbourhood could offer you such accommodation as that! Yes—the lock is out of order; I don’t deny it. The last lodger’s doings! She spoilt my table-cloth, and put the ink-stand over it to hide the place. Beast! there’s her character in one word. You didn’t hear me knock at the bedroom door? I am so glad to see her sleeping nicely, poor dear. Her chicken broth is ready when she wakes. I’m late to-day in making my inquiries after our young lady. You see we have been hard at work upstairs, getting the bedroom ready for a new lodger. Such a contrast to the person who has just left. A perfect gentleman, this time—and so kind in waiting a week till I was able to

accommodate him. My ground floor rooms were vacant, as you know—but he said the terms were too high for him. Oh, I didn't forget to mention that we had an invalid in the house! Quiet habits (I said) are indeed an essential qualification of any new inmate, at such a time as this. He understood. "I've been an invalid myself" (he said); "and the very reason I am leaving my present lodgings is that they are not quiet enough." Isn't that just the sort of man we want? And, let me tell you, a handsome man too. With a drawback, I must own, in the shape of a bald head. But such a beard, and such a thrilling voice. Hush! Did I hear her calling?' "

At last, the landlady permitted other sounds to be audible, besides the sound of her own voice. It became possible to discover that Carmina was now awake. Teresa hurried into the bedroom.

Left by herself in the sitting-room, the landlady—'purely out of curiosity,' as she afterwards said, in conversation with her new lodger—opened the cupboard, and looked in. The canister stood straight before her, on an upper shelf. Did Miss Carmina's nurse take snuff? She examined the canister. The Italian inscription spoke in an unknown tongue. She looked at the powder—wetted her finger—tasted the powder—and spat into her handkerchief. The effect on her tongue was of a disagreeably burning sort. She put the canister back, and closed the cupboard. 'Medicine, undoubtedly,' the landlady said to herself. 'Why should she hurry to put it away, when I came in?'

## CHAPTER L.

In eight days from the date of his second interview with Mrs. Gallilee, Mr. Le Frank took possession of his new bedroom.

He had arranged to report his first proceedings to Mrs. Gallilee, in writing. Personal communication with her (if it was accidentally discovered) might, as he feared, arouse Teresa's suspicions—for this sufficient reason, that she knew him by sight. They had met more than once, at the time of Carmina's arrival in England, when the nurse was in the house.

He employed the next day in collecting materials for his first report. In the evening, he wrote to Mrs. Gallilee—under cover to a friend, who was instructed to forward the letter.

'Private and confidential. Dear Madam,—I have not wasted my time and my opportunities, as you will presently see.

'My bedroom is immediately above the floor of the house which is occupied by Miss Carmina and her nurse. Having some little matters of my own to settle, I was late in taking possession

of my room. Before the lights on the staircase were put out, I took the liberty of looking down at the next landing. It was on my conscience not to go to bed until I had at least attempted to make some first discoveries.

‘Do you remember, when you were a child learning to write, that one of the lines in your copy-book was, “Virtue is its own reward”? This ridiculous assertion was actually verified in my case! Before I had been five minutes at my post, I saw the nurse open her door. She looked up the staircase (without discovering me, it is needless to say), and she looked down the staircase—and, seeing nobody about, returned to her rooms.

‘Waiting till I heard her lock the door, I stole downstairs, and listened outside.

‘One of my two fellow-lodgers (you know that I don’t believe in Miss Carmina’s illness) was lighting a fire—on such a warm autumn night, that the staircase window was left open! I am absolutely sure of what I say; I heard the crackle of burning wood—I smelt coal smoke. The motive of this secret proceeding it seems impossible to guess at. If they were burning documents of a dangerous and compromising kind, a candle would have answered their purpose. If they wanted hot water, surely a tin kettle and a spirit lamp must have been at hand in an invalid’s bedroom. Perhaps, your superior penetration may be able to read the riddle which baffles my ingenuity.

‘So much for the first night.

‘This afternoon, I had some talk with the landlady. My professional avocations having trained me in the art of making myself agreeable to the fair sex, I may say without vanity that I produced a highly favourable impression. The young lady’s illness had been already mentioned to me (as an apology for asking if my habits were quiet) when I presented myself as a lodger. It was only natural that a kind-hearted stranger, like myself, should ask how she was going on, and whether she had a devoted mother to take care of her. This was enough to set the landlady talking.

‘Out of the flow of words poured on me, one fact of very serious importance has risen to the surface.

‘Only yesterday, my landlady discovered her foreign lodger in the act of hiding something in the sitting-room cupboard. At the first favourable opportunity, she looked in, and found a small canister on the shelf—bearing a label on it written in a language unknown to her. Opening the canister, she saw a white powder inside, and ventured to taste it. It produced such a nasty burning sensation that she spat it out again. The powder, as she supposes, is some strong medicine intended to be taken in water.

But why the nurse should have been in a hurry to hide the canister is more than she can say.

‘I might have been no wiser than the landlady, but for a circumstance of which I now beg leave to remind you.

‘During the week of delay which elapsed, before the lodger in possession vacated my room, you kindly admitted me to an interview. My conviction that the Italian woman is capable, if you drive her to extremities, of attempting to poison you, formed the principal subject of our conversation. Among other things, I said that Teresa’s antecedents might, quite possibly, justify my opinion; and I ventured to put some questions, relating to her life in Italy and to the persons with whom she associated. Do you remember telling me, when I asked what you knew of her husband, that he was foreman in a manufactory of artists’ colours? and that you had your information from Miss Carmina herself, after she had shown you the telegram announcing his death?

‘A lady, possessed of your scientific knowledge, does not require to be told that poisons are employed in the manufacture of artists’ colours. Remember what the priest’s letter says of Teresa’s feeling towards you, and then say—Is it so very unlikely that she has brought with her to England one of the poisons used by her husband in his trade? and is it quite unreasonable to suppose that she might have been thinking of you, when she concealed the canister from the landlady’s notice?

‘On the other hand, it is equally possible (I pride myself on seeing both sides of a question) that the white powder may be quinine, instead of arsenic. I intend to settle that question by personal investigation. The landlady has a grievance against a former lodger who has damaged her furniture. In alluding to the cupboard, she mentioned as part of this grievance that the lock was out of order. My next report shall tell you that I have contrived to provide myself with a small sample of the white powder—leaving the canister undisturbed. The sample shall be tested by a chemist. If he pronounces it to be poison, I have a bold course of action to propose.

‘As soon as you are well enough to go to the house, give the nurse her chance of poisoning you.

‘Pray, dear madam, don’t be alarmed! I will accompany you; and I answer for the result. We will pay our visit at tea-time. Let her offer you a cup—and let me (under pretence of handing it) get possession of the poisoned drink. Before she can cry Stop!—I shall be on my way to the chemist. The penalty for attempted murder is penal servitude. If you still object to a public exposure, we have the chemist’s report, together with our own evidence,

ready for your son on his return. How will he feel about his marriage-engagement when he finds that Miss Carmina's dearest friend and companion has tried—*perhaps, with her young lady's knowledge*—to poison his mother?

'Before concluding my report, I may mention that I had a narrow escape, only two hours since, of being seen by Teresa on the stairs. I was of course prepared for this sort of meeting, when I engaged my room; and I have therefore not been foolish enough to enter the house under an assumed name. On the contrary, I propose (in your interests) to establish a neighbourly acquaintance—with time to help me. But the matter of the poison admits of no delay. My chance of getting at the cupboard unobserved may be seriously compromised (you know how suspicious foreigners are) if the nurse is on her guard. The sight of me may, in the mind of such a woman, have that effect. To-night or to-morrow, I must find my way to the canister.—Your devoted servant, L. F.'

Having completed his letter, he rang for the servant, and gave it to her to post.

On her way downstairs she was stopped on the next landing by Mr. Null. He too had a letter ready: addressed to Doctor Benjulia. The fierce old nurse followed him out, and said, 'Post it instantly!' The civil servant asked if Miss Carmina was better. 'Worse!'—was all the rude foreigner said. She looked at poor Mr. Null, as if it was his fault.

Left in the retirement of his room, Mr. Le Frank sat at the writing table, frowning and biting his nails.

Were these evidences of a troubled mind connected with the infamous proposal which he had addressed to Mrs. Gallilee? Nothing of the sort! Having done with his report, he was now at leisure to let his personal anxieties absorb him without restraint. He was thinking of Carmina.

In offering his services to Mrs. Gallilee, the foremost among the motives that animated him was a sense of bitter disappointment. He had failed to find the smallest confirmation of his own private suspicions, in searching Carmina's room. He had now followed her to Teresa's lodgings, with his own interests, as well as Mrs. Gallilee's interests, in view—resolute as ever to discover the secret of Carmina's behaviour to him. For the hundredth time he said to himself, 'Her devilish malice reviles me behind my back, and asks me before my face to shake hands and be friends.' The more outrageously unreasonable his suspicions became, under the exasperating influence of suspense, the more inveterately his mean and vindictive nature held to its delusion. After his meeting with



her in the hall, he really believed Carmina's illness to have been assumed as a means of keeping out of his way. As for Teresa he seriously distrusted her, as her young mistress's accomplice. He was even prepared to discover that the unfavourable reception, accorded by the music-sellers to his Song, was due to the intriguing influence of the two women. If a friend had said to him, 'But what reason have you to think so?'—he would have smiled compassionately, and have given that friend up for a shallow-minded man.

He stole out again, and listened, undetected, at their door. Carmina was speaking; but the words, in those faint tones, were inaudible. Teresa's stronger voice easily reached his ears. 'My darling, talking is not good for you. I'll light the night-lamp—try to sleep.'

Hearing this, he went back to his bedroom to wait a little. Teresa's vigilance might relax if Carmina fell asleep. She might go downstairs for a gossip with the landlady.

After smoking a cigar, he tried again. The lights on the staircase were now put out: it was eleven o'clock.

She was not asleep: the nurse was reading to her from some devotional book. He gave it up, for that night. His head ached; the ferment of his own abominable thoughts had fevered him. A cowardly dread of the slightest signs of illness was one of his special weaknesses. The whole day, to-morrow, was before him. He felt his own pulse; and determined, in justice to himself, to go to bed.

Ten minutes later, the landlady, on *her* way to bed, ascended the stairs. She too heard the voice, still reading aloud—and tapped softly at the door. Teresa opened it.

'Is the poor thing not asleep yet?'

'No.'

'Has she been disturbed in any way?'

'Somebody has been walking about, overhead,' Teresa answered.

'That's the new lodger!' exclaimed the landlady. 'I'll speak to Mr. Le Frank.'

On the point of closing the door and saying good-night, Teresa stopped, and considered for a moment.

'Is *he* your new lodger?' she said.

'Yes. Do you know him?'

'I saw him when I was last in England.'

'Well?'

'Nothing more,' Teresa answered. 'Good-night.'

(To be continued.)

## Four Japanese Folk-Tales.

PROBABLY in no country of the world can there be found such a wealth of folk-lore, fairy tales, and legends as in Japan, and the existence of these creations of the fancy is quite in keeping with that gay, light-hearted character which has won for the inhabitants the title, amongst many others, of 'The French of the East.' The study of Japanese fairy tales is especially interesting to us, because in them we are struck with the very strong resemblance to our own most popular nursery legends. Cinderella, Jack the Giant Killer, Valentine and Orson, may be found exactly reproduced by any one who will take the trouble to examine the quaint paper-bound volumes which strew the mats of every Japanese house where there are children; and as it has been proved beyond doubt that the origin of most of our tales is to be found in the East, whither they came together with our chemical nomenclature and our system of enumeration, there seems no cause to laugh at the idea that originally they may have come from Japan—especially when we remember that 'westward the course of empire takes its way.'

The four stories which follow have been chosen for their dissimilarity from anything in our language, and, although capable of being appreciated by people of mature years as well as by children, are translated from a curious old volume which the writer picked up in a by-street of the city of Yedo, entitled 'A hundred lessons in Virtue for youthful minds.' A literal translation has been impossible, owing to the innumerable puns, quibbles, and eccentricities which abound in the original text, but its significance has been faithfully preserved.

The first story is entitled

### THE FOX KETTLE.

ON the beautiful shores of the Bay of Odawarra there lived, many years ago, a young couple. The man was out with the boats fishing for the greater part of the week, whilst his wife strove to make some little addition to their precarious income by the sale of fruits and sweetmeats to travellers. The fisherman was an honest, sober, hard-working fellow enough, but he had one great fault, and this was a rooted disrespect for the gods of the country: and no amount of persuasion on the part of his wife, or remonstrance on the part of his neighbours, or argument on the part of his priest, could

convince him that the deities were anything else than—to translate exactly the Japanese expression—‘arrant humbugs.’ ‘What good are they to us?’ he would say to his wife; ‘I may kneel until my legs are sore, I may pray until my voice is hoarse, but for all that the gods don’t send the fish into my nets, and I don’t see that we get any the better off for all my devotions.’ His wife, who was a soft-speaking, gentle-minded woman, always reproached him for the contempt with which he treated the gods, and would answer, ‘Nay, Kikuchi, we have health and strength, and surely they are far more worth than all the riches of the world.’

They were sitting one evening over the charcoal brasier, the children were playing on the beach outside, and the kettle was boiling merrily. Suddenly the charcoal shifted, the kettle overturned, scalded the woman’s hand, and put out the fire. Kikuchi, who had met with but poor sport during the day, and who was not in the best of humours, broke out into a towering passion, seized the kettle, and flung it out on to the beach. ‘Ever since I bought this horrid thing,’ he cried, ‘it has done nothing but give us trouble, so there it goes, and we’ll get a new one,’ and he ran out and kicked the kettle angrily about until it disappeared in the waves. When he returned he found his wife in an agony of tears. ‘What is the matter, O Hana?’ he asked. O Hana did not reply, but merely pointed to a dark corner of the room. Kikuchi looked and saw a large fox staring at him with his red, sparkling eyes. Seizing a wooden wine measure, he hurled it at the intruder, but the animal was too quick, and the missile crashed through the paper window into the street. ‘O Kikuchi! Kikuchi! what have you done!’ cried O Hana. ‘You’ve driven Kitsuné away!’ (Here, it should be explained that the fox is held in universal reverence by the Japanese people. The god Inari, patron of rice, fish, and daily food, is especially fond of assuming the guise of a fox, and his appearance is looked upon, according to circumstances, as a good or evil omen.) ‘Well! what do I care?’ retorted Kikuchi, gulping down a cup of wine. ‘What do I care for an ugly, red-eyed, prying fox? You believe he’s a god, but I know better, and I only wish the thing had hit him.’

But O Hana was very sorrowful for the rest of the evening, and retired to bed with her children earlier than usual. That night Kikuchi had a terrible dream. The kettle appeared in a flame of fire, and out of the spout was a huge fox brush. It remained at the foot of his quilts all the night, and seemed to glare at him with a couple of large red eyes. He could not get rid of the apparition, try as he might, and when morning dawned he was worn and irritable with the loss of his night’s rest.

During the next day his eldest boy, a bouncing youngster of seven, sickened. The doctor was called in. He examined the patient's eyelids, and asked, 'Have you been quarrelling lately?' Both husband and wife answered, 'No.' 'Have you been drinking too much?' 'No.' 'Have you been blaspheming?' Kikuchi with a blush answered, 'No.' 'Has anything out of the way happened lately?' 'Nothing in particular,' said Kikuchi; 'I was in a bit of a temper last evening with my old kettle, and kicked it away.' 'Kicked a kettle away!' said the doctor; 'that is a bad thing to do, for Kitsuné is very fond of kettles. I thought that the child must have a devil, so if he takes a little Furidashi, and these twelve pills every half-hour with hot water, he will get over it.'

The anxious parents tried the Furidashi and the pills, but with no beneficial effect, for the poor little fellow grew worse and worse. The last remedy was tried—the swallowing of the holy picture worn round every child's neck, dissolved in hot water; but with no success, for he died. Still Kikuchi was not convinced that he had done wrong, but continued to rail at the gods in general and a Kitsuné in particular, in the wildest manner. The weird apparition still haunted him at nights, his fishing produced nothing, no travellers stopped to buy O Hana's fruit, and everything went to rack and ruin. Then O Hana resolved that she would go to the shrine of Inari on the hillside. So, when the morn rose behind the tall, black pine trees, she crept softly away unobserved by her husband, and knelt at the shrine of the god. 'O Kitsuné!' she said, with the tears streaming from her eyes, 'I am in great distress. Help me!' A blaze of light appeared in the shrine, and in the midst of it she saw the great fox god. He looked at her for a moment with kindling eyes, merely said, 'Find the kettle,' and disappeared. As she descended the rough path, she saw a red glare in the heavens. A terrible thought came across her mind, and, alas! when she arrived at the village she beheld her house in flames, Kikuchi and her children standing outside with the few articles they had been able to save, and in the midst of the flames was the fox, crying out, 'The kettle! The kettle!' Kind neighbours sheltered the homeless family for the night. O Hana told Kikuchi all she had seen, and was glad to see that he was an altered man. Early the next day they set forth to search for the kettle. Along the shore, through the village, on the high road, even to the great town they went, and at last in an old iron shop they found the kettle, much battered and bruised. Tenderly they wrapped it up and carried it back to the village; there they polished it, mended up the holes which had been made in its sides, and together they went to the shrine of Inari. The

god appeared as he had appeared to O Hana, and in terrible tones he said, 'Kikuchi, learn from this lesson never to mock at the gods; go, and sin no more.'

And Kikuchi mended his ways, religiously kept the kettle clean and burnished, paid his devotions twice a day at the shrine of Inari, and was rewarded by continual happiness and prosperity.

The next story is called

#### THE TWO BAMBOOS.

By the side of the Bay of Yedo (as we are telling old stories we like to keep the old names), on a beautiful bank, ablaze with the colours of the azalea, the iris, and the camellia, grew two bamboo trees. The one was tall, lusty, and strong, the other was graceful, drooping, and tender. Said the stronger to the weaker, 'I should like to know what good you are. The smallest breeze makes you bend your head almost double and sigh with pain. Look at me! I don't care what wind blows or what storms come from the sea. I can face them and feel the better for it.' The slender bamboo at his side, who was as modest and retiring as she was graceful and beautiful, replied, 'Yes, we are each suited to our vocation in life. You will be a stout coolie pole.' 'Coolie pole, forsooth!' snorted her neighbour contemptuously. 'Not I! nothing but the mast of a junk for me, that's life, if you like. 'And I,' continued the slender bamboo, 'I shall be used to decorate a house at the New Year festival, if I'm to be used at all.' 'Don't you count on that,' roughly said the big bamboo: 'they'll make you into mats, or a coolie's rain coat, or something or other low. Why, look there! you're fit for nothing else.' As he spoke a strong breeze came in from the sea and made the whole hillside quiver and sigh, all but the stout bamboo, who merely bent his head as much as to say: 'Go on, go on; it pleases you and doesn't hurt me!' whilst the poor little one at his side bent and swayed, and groaned heavily to see so many of her tender leaves swept away.

Time went on. The wood-cutters came. 'Orra! Orra!' they cried, 'here's a fine fellow for Hinashi's junk! we'll get tenpence for him!' 'Told you so,' whispered the big bamboo to the little one. 'Now for life! Hurrah! anything rather than stop on this monotonous old bank, spending the best years of one's life in listening to your groanings.' The axes were plied, and he fell with a thundering crash. Then he was stripped of his branches and shaped, and in a few days was sailing merrily over the blue waters of the bay, as happy as could be.

Meanwhile the slender bamboo grew more graceful and more

beautiful every day, and the village children came to play under her shade, for they had learnt to love her, and called her their 'Silver Spray.'

One day there was a great hullabaloo in the plantation, such a whispering and chattering amongst the azaleas and the camellias as had never been heard before, for the azaleas and camellias are enemies and rarely speak to one another. 'What is the matter?' asked the bamboo of her neighbour. 'They're going to build a house here for the prince of Tosa,' replied the tree, 'and we're all to be swept away.' 'O dear! O dear!' said the bamboo, 'that's a bad business; I wish I had been born stout and strong, and I would have been a junk mast instead of being carted away to heat baths.'

And the next day the wood-cutters came and the work of destruction commenced. Down upon the sand were thrown the beautiful flowers and the graceful clusters of leaves; the little bamboo trembled as she saw her friends falling around her, and wondered when her turn would come. At length the destroyers approached her, and one man was swinging his axe in the air to give her the fatal blow, when a chorus of child voices was heard—'No, don't kill Silver Spray! please don't.' And the man dropped his arms, and she was saved. The children tenderly dug her out and carried her to a beautiful garden, where they planted her on a bank overlooking the sea. One day a dreadful storm arose. The blue water was churned into dark-green mountains of waves capped with white foam; the wind blew furiously, and in all directions junks could be seen flying to the nearest point of shelter. It was a terrible time for all the trees and plants around, but the bamboo was sheltered by a high bank of purple iris. Next morning the shore presented a woful appearance, for it was strewed with timbers, and masts, and torn sails, and even dead bodies of men; and amongst the remains the bamboo recognised her big, strong companion of old days, badly bruised and cracked in many places. As the men dragged him up to the foot of the garden, he saw her and said, 'Ah! I wish I had been a coolie pole!' And he was cut up for firewood; but the slender bamboo flourished for many years after, and when she heard boasting going on around her would often tell the story of her strong, lusty companion.

The third story is called

#### INARI'S JOURNEY.

THE great fox-god, Inari, once determined that he would make a journey through the city to find out where true honesty and goodness existed. It was a bad age of crime and corruption.

Civil wars tore the heart of the fair island; the rich plundered the poor; the poor could get neither justice nor reparation; men's minds were aflame with avarice, and the sun shone upon as foul a scene of depravity as it had ever seen since the days of the fifth great Deluge. The first place that Inari visited was the counting-house of one of the greatest merchants of the city of Yedo. 'At any rate,' he said, 'I shall find fair dealing and honesty here, for this man's junks float on a hundred waters, his word is as good as a bond, and his name is a byword for uprightness and integrity.'

He took up his position in the shape of a cobweb in a corner of the sample room. The tide of customers and merchants flowed in and out; the money rattled into the coffers; the clerks were busy with pen and scroll; but no one saw what Inari saw. His heart smote him to see the tricks of trade, and the deceptions practised; the chests of tea were filled with coloured leaves and dust sweepings; the bales of silk were weighted with false materials, and their contents dyed with false colours; lacquer and bronze manufactured in the next street were sold as the veritable productions of old times; the very scales used were false; the entries in the scrolls were false; and the stories told to the customers were false. The next day the whole city was thrown into a state of consternation at the news that the great firm had failed, and that the head partner had gone away no one knew whither.

The next journey of the god was to the 'yashiki,' or palace of the great lord of Bizen, one of the haughtiest and proudest of the nobles of the empire. As he seated himself in the guise of a fly on the top of a sword rack in the banquetting chamber he said, 'He is too great to be ambitious; he is too rich to be avaricious; he has too great expenses to be extravagant; he has nothing to scheme for, his fame is too bright for him to dare to sully it by dishonesty; he is too familiar with pleasure to be vicious.'

The banquet was spread, and the great lord entered in gorgeous apparel. The sweets, with which the meal commenced, were served in dishes of the purest Nagasaki porcelain; the rice was in the finest of old gold lacquer; the wine—that prince of wines, the 'Flower in Full Bloom'—hissed and bubbled in vases of the choicest Bizen ware, whilst the rarest of fish and fowl came up in quaint dishes brought from China. Merrily the feast proceeded; the wine-cup circled incessantly; cheeks grew flushed; eyes began to sparkle, and tongues wagged fast. There was nothing in this with which Inari could find fault, for the prince was wealthy, and it became his dignity to keep a sumptuous table, but he was annoyed

and disgusted to observe with what brutality the prince treated his wife, a poor, modest, retiring creature, whose only fault seemed to be that she brooked her husband's insolence too meekly. If she spoke Bizen answered her roughly; if she smiled he frowned, and the poor woman knew not which way to look or how to behave. When the dancing girls were ushered in, a retainer, humbly prostrating himself as he crawled along the floor, brought the prince a note. Inari, who of course could see through walls, doors, and everything, espied a poor ragged man, evidently half dead with cold and want, sitting in the snow outside. 'Now,' said the god to himself, 'I shall see the true nature of the prince.' When Bizen opened the note his face grew purple with passion, his brow was puckered into a network of frowns, and his hand stretched out to his sword—an act at table which is only tolerated under the most exceptional circumstances. When Bizen had so far collected himself as to be able to speak, he roared, 'What does the scamp mean by intruding upon my privacy with his beggarly petitions? Who let him in at the great gate?' 'What is it?' asked his wife incautiously. The prince turned on her like a wild animal. 'What is it, madam?' he hissed. 'Why, it's a letter from an impostor who declares that I have ruined him by forfeiting his tenure last summer; he says he is starving, and has the unheard-of insolence to ask me for the loan of a hundred riyos!' 'You can afford to let him have them, can you not?' meekly asked his wife; 'so I will go and give them to him.' The prince raised his hand and struck the unhappy woman to the ground.

Inari could stay no longer. Outside, where cowered the beggar, he assumed the guise of a retainer. 'Where do you live?' he asked the poor man. 'At Kawasaki, your noble honour,' replied the man, trembling with terror, 'and I have walked here through the snow some fourteen miles to ask his highness for a little help, for I am very poor and miserable, and through no fault of my own.' 'Are you honest?' asked Inari. 'I try to be, your honour,' answered the poor fellow. 'I can easily find out,' said the god, 'so do not deceive me.' The beggar looked at him. Inari placed his hand in the poor man's sleeve and disappeared. The beggar, bewildered, looked round, then felt in his sleeve and pulled out notes to the value of five hundred riyos. Then he fell on his knees and cried, 'It is the worshipful Inari himself!' and went his way rejoicing.

The next day the Prince of Bizen was murdered, and his palace burnt to the ground by a mob of discontented tenants.

The next journey of Inari was to a hall of justice. 'If I don't find honesty here,' he said, 'I don't know where to look for it.'



The day's business began, and Inari took the form of a pen in the hand of one of the clerks. 'Call the first case,' said the judge, a big, heavy fellow, with a face which betokened constant acquaintance with the good things of this life. The first criminal was introduced; he was carried in, for he had lain five days in a noisome cell with weights upon his back and legs, and could not move. 'You are accused of robbery,' said the judge. 'Nay, your honour,' whispered the poor wretch, 'I was starving. I saw a rice cake on a shop shelf, and I could not resist the temptation to seize it.' 'Doesn't matter. It's robbery,' said the judge. 'People's property must be protected. Fifty stripes with the bamboo, a month's hard labour upon rice and water, and think yourself lucky to get off with your head! Next case.'

A dissolute-looking young fellow, fashionably dressed, swaggered in between two jailers. 'Sorry to see you here, Mr. Hanaški,' said the judge, blandly. 'Same as before, I suppose?' 'Well, sir,' replied the young man, with an air of careless effrontery, 'it was at the "Three Pine Trees"; I suppose I had been drinking a bit; the wench was impudent, and I cut her down. I suppose a couple of hundred riyos for the family will settle it?' 'Oh, as it was justifiable,' said the judge, 'we'll call it a hundred. Good morning.' The young man paid the money and left the court.

Inari shuddered. 'Here,' thought he, 'is a poor wretch who is convicted of having stolen a cake worth half a tempo to appease the cravings of his hunger, and is condemned to be crippled for life; and a young blackguard who kills a woman gets off with an easy fine!' On the spot he struck the judge with a dropsy, from which he never recovered; and the young murderer was waylaid by the friends of the girl, and so maltreated that he died of his wounds.

Heart-sick and mortified, Inari said, 'Now for Kawasaki. Possibly, but not probably, I shall find beneath the lowly peasant's roof what I have failed to discover in the gilded palaces of the mighty.' To Kawasaki he went as a pilgrim. He soon espied the beggar cutting wood outside a poor but neat little hut hard by the ferry. Assuming an air of great weariness the god addressed him, 'I am bound for the holy O Yama, to do my mid-winter penance beneath the cascade at Koyias. I am very poor, and cannot afford to go to one of the great tea-houses; perhaps you will let me rest here a while and refresh myself, in return for what few tempos I can give.' The peasant took Inari's arm gently and led him in. 'O Kiku!' he cried to his wife, 'here, quick, bring some warm water, and something to eat and drink;

here is a poor old pilgrim, tired and hungry.' A pleasant-looking old woman approached at the summons and saluted Inari. Then the warm water was brought and she bathed the feet of the god, whilst her husband scraped together what little food and wine there was in the house, and set it before him. 'I feel ashamed,' said Inari, 'at trespassing upon the good nature of those who are as poor as myself.' 'Do not mention it, sir,' said the peasant. 'We have to work hard for our living, but we have always something to spare for poor travellers like yourself.'

'And how do you get your living, if it is not a rude question?' asked Inari. 'I cut wood for the great tea-houses,' replied the man, 'and at busy times I help the ferryman. But I had such great good luck the other day that we are quite comfortable now.' And he told Inari about his visit to the Bizen palace.

The god said nothing for a few minutes, and then he asked, 'I shall be returning here in a fortnight's time; could you make it convenient to lend me fifty riyos?'

'Willingly, sir,' said the peasant, and he counted out the sum from his bamboo stem and placed the paper in the hand of the god. In a fortnight Inari returned to the peasant's house and said, 'Here are the fifty riyos you were kind enough to lend me—and,' taking from his own pocket a roll of notes, 'here are five hundred more. I only borrowed from you to test your heart, and perhaps you can guess who I am.' The astonished and delighted couple fell on their knees, in an ecstasy of joy. Inari disappeared, and the poor peasant prospered ever after, until he became the owner of the largest tea-house in Kawasaki.

The fourth story is called

#### A CURE FOR DISCONTENT.

IN that low quarter of the city of Yedo, called Shinagawa, there lived a poor sandal-maker. He was very poor, and belonged to the proscribed tribe of Etas, a race which, previous to the present era of refinement and enlightenment, lived by themselves, the spurned and despised of men, able only to follow certain trades of a menial character, such as the flaying of animals, the execution of criminals, and the making of sandals and clogs, to which the free-born citizens would not stoop. Poverty and misery preyed upon the mind of the poor sandal-maker so much that one night he said to his wife, 'O Taki, I wish I could be a great lord for a few days, to do nothing, to eat and drink of the best, and never to be obliged to think about spending a tempo.' 'Don't be stupid, Denkichi,' replied his wife; 'you would never do to be a lord, you might just as well try to swallow Fuji' (the great mountain). But the

god Inari, who was prowling about as was his wont, heard this, and resolved that he would teach the poor man a lesson of contentment. So when the sandal-maker was asleep between his filthy quilts he appeared to him, and said, 'You want to be a lord. Very well, you shall try it for a week.'

The sandal-maker rubbed his eyes and awoke. He was in a beautiful room, the walls of which were hung with curiously painted scrolls; the mats were of the finest and whitest straw; his quilts were of the softest silk, and his pillow was of camphor wood with a roll of the best bamboo paper tied upon it.

As he awoke a servant approached him kneeling, with a tray of sweetmeats. Denkichi took a handful and swallowed them, smacked his lips, and cleared the dish. The servant prostrated himself to the mats and retired, as he came, kneeling. 'Well,' said Denkichi, 'this is luck! I suppose I'd better dress.' His old garments were gone, and in their place was a suit of splendidly embroidered silk, fitted with stiff cardboard wings, and adorned with huge white crests of oak leaves. A personage who seemed to be a sort of major-domo appeared, and informed him that the suitors were waiting in the ante-room. 'But where's O Taki?' asked Denkichi. The man shook his head. 'Well, as I'm a regular lord,' thought Denkichi, 'I may as well see what it's like; but I should have liked O Taki to have seen me. And these clothes are confoundedly hot and heavy. But never mind, here goes!' So he went into the ante-room, where there must have been at least a hundred people assembled, who all made obeisance as he appeared. The major-domo showed him a sort of raised dais on which he was to seat himself, and for three long hours he was obliged to remain motionless, listening to claims and petitions, and remonstrances and beggings of favours, and details of estates, and of revenue, and of a hundred other things about which he knew nothing. Several times he felt as if he would have liked to jump up and stretch his legs, and hitched himself uneasily, but the eye of the major-domo spoke a silent remonstrance, and he subsided with a sigh.

When at length the business was concluded, Denkichi was about to fling off his robes, and lie down as was his wont, half naked, with his pipe between his lips and a bowl of wine beside him, when the major-domo informed him that the hour of the midday meal had arrived. At this repast he was introduced to the ladies of his retinue, who were magnificently arrayed, but so staid and solemn of demeanour, so unable to appreciate the jokes by which he had won for himself the name of the 'Shinagawa Wit,' that he would much rather have had his plain, homely O

Taki by his side. The meat was splendid, but Denkichi would have preferred a dish of stewed eels, a bowl of Yakidofu, and a measure of Three Virtue wine, to all the delicate dishes presented to him, so smothered in sauces and condiments as not to preserve an atom of their natural flavour. It was a long affair too, and when it was over he exclaimed with a sigh of relief, 'Well, at any rate, now they'll let me have half an hour's peace.' But the major-domo approached, and reminded him that the fencing master was waiting. So poor Denkichi was obliged to encase himself in a heavy suit of chain armour, and for more than an hour attack and defend, repeat, parry, cut, lunge, and dance about until he was nigh dropping with fatigue. After the fencing came the master of Chinese, and after the master of Chinese the music instructor. A few cups of tea—spoilt, so thought Denkichi, by the infusion of cherry flower—somewhat refreshed him, and for the first time during the day he was enabled to get a few minutes of such rest as his stiff raiment would allow him. But the business of the day was by no means over. A council of the heads of the ward was held, at which Denkichi presided, and again he had to sit listening to dry arguments on questions of law, petty differences of opinion, long speeches, and statements about matters in which he did not feel the slightest interest. This was followed by the evening meal, an entertainment just as formal and twice as lengthy as that at midday. He was almost asleep with weariness and fatigue, and would have crept into his sumptuous bedchamber, but the major-domo—how he hated that major-domo!—told him that a new theatre had been opened in the quarter, and that the people would be offended if the lord were not to honour the first night with his presence. A fresh suit of clothes, if possible heavier and stiffer than the first, was necessary for this performance, and not until the small hours of the next morning could poor Denkichi at last throw himself down between the quilts, only to be aroused in a short time to meet the assembly of suitors.

So, for a week this continued, with but little variation. On the evening of the sixth day Inari appeared. 'Well,' he said, 'how do you like it?' Denkichi fell on his knees. 'Let me go back this minute!' he cried, 'and never more shall you hear a word of discontent pass my mouth.' Inari granted his prayer, and he found himself back again at the old hut in Shinagawa, with O Taki by his side. So utterly wearied and worn out was he that he slept during the whole of the next day, and then he related his experiences to a wondering circle of friends. But he never more was heard to grumble at his lowly condition.

## The Green Turban : a Mystery.

### I.

It was October 24, 187—, and the thick, melancholy afternoon was sinking into murky night. We sat—that is, I, the youngest of the family, our old invalid mother, and Edward, just returned from a voyage to San Francisco—we sat about the fire in the long, low drawing-room, while our sister Charlotte went to her own room to lie down. She had taken a long walk by the cliffs and the sands with Edward—too long, he thought, considering that she had only just recovered from the prostration consequent on a too assiduous nursing of mother—and he kept glancing anxiously towards the door as if he would follow her. We were silent, waiting for tea in that vacant mood which those alone who make afternoon tea a meal can quite understand, and the witch-elm at the west window and the yew at the east looked in upon us, as silent and unoccupied as ourselves. I rose and went to the west window; the red sun was contriving to look through the thin skirt of the cloudy canopy and to shed a dull lurid light through the tall trees on the distant horizon, and the wind came from the desolate flats of the wold and crept moaning round the house. I moved across to the other window; at no great distance was the sudden margin of the cliff, and then the glooming sea and the leaden sky.

‘Come and sit down, Jim,’ said Edward; ‘you fidget mother there; don’t he, mother? No? Well, you fidget me. Don’t you know the air feels to me as if I were going to have a thumping headache? If I were at sea now I would shorten sail down to the lower top-sails.’

I sat down again, and Edward again turned anxious looks toward the door.

‘Poor Lotty,’ he said, ‘I’m afraid she’s not nearly well yet, mother; and she complained, when we were out, of her eyes smarting with the sea air.’

‘She’s been far from strong for a good while now, poor child,’ said mother; ‘and she’s been a poor one to sleep since she watched with me so much. I hope, I do, she’s not going to be ill.’

At this suggestion we sat silent and looked at the fire. We sat thus for some time, till our servant entered and announced tea was ready. We had little more than sat down when we were

startled by a shriek, and the servant rushed back into the dining room as pale as a dish-cloth.

'Oh, missus!' she cried, 'oh, master! But I've just met Miss Charlotte at the door of her room looking so fearsome-like, and she caught hold of me and tried to speak, but couldn't, and it took me so sudden and she looked so queer that I ran away!'

In an instant we were all out of the room and into Charlotte's. She lay on her bed either asleep or in a faint.

'She has fainted,' said mother.

'But what is this?' exclaimed Edward, showing a large scar across her left wrist. 'Get some water,' said he to me, while mother produced her smelling-salts.

Edward chanced to touch, perhaps to press, her left hand, and that did more than either the salts or the water to bring her round. She winced as with pain, withdrew her hand, looked round slowly upon us, and then with a sudden turn glanced fearfully behind her.

'Have you found him? Have you seen him?' she demanded.

'Him?' we glanced at her and at each other. 'Who?'

'Oh,' said she, after a reflective pause, 'I suppose it must have been merely a horrid dream.' Saying this she raised her hand and saw the scar across her wrist. On the instant she sat up pale and rigid. 'Then,' she cried, 'it must have been! But, here you all are! And—here's my hand like this, and—do you see anything at the back of my neck? It is sore, too—I can't understand it!' She seemed ready to burst into tears, though she was usually the bravest-hearted of girls.

'Come, Lotty, my girl,' said Edward, patting and soothing her. 'Try and be the brave girl I have always boasted my sister was. Collect yourself and remember. Tell us what troubles you, my dear—how all this came about.'

'I suppose I was dreaming,' said she. 'I had just come in, I thought, from a wide, wide sandy plain, where the heat was so great I could see the air as it were simmering, and found myself in a delicious, cool garden, where the air was laden with rich sweet scents, and where I saw roses—not small English ones, but great things like peonies—and orange-trees, and a tangle of sweet and beautiful trees, and flowers, and shrubs that I did not know. I wandered about seeking something, I don't know what, when I came out upon an open place and saw before me a great dazzling white building with a court or verandah. I looked into the shade of the court, and I thought it was—oh, so beautiful! The floor was all wonderfully small, and bright, and delicate mosaic work

and the walls seemed painted or inlaid in a very minute curious pattern in all sorts of colours. I suddenly saw a figure appear in one corner and then disappear; it was completely wrapped in a white mantle, all except the head, and that was black and woolly like a negro's. I was just thinking whether I should go on or go back, when I received a heavy blow on the back of my head; that brought me to my knees, and I turned round and saw a dark, thin, ferocious face, with burning eyes and a black beard, and a great green turban. I had just seen it when I saw a hand with a red-hot iron come to my eyes; I struggled, and in my struggle I brought my hand up to my face and the iron burned my wrist here as you see it. I somehow got away from the man, and I saw the person with the white mantle again, and I called out to him, and I knew no more. Oh, I feel so sore and sleepy; let me be.' And she settled herself again on the bed and passed into sleep.

Mother was now so excited with fear that she forgot her own weakness, and shook Charlotte and talked to her with energy to rouse her.

'Now, Lotty! Charlotte! Don't be foolish! Don't give way in this fashion!'

'Better let her alone, mother,' said Edward, seeing this had no effect on his sister but to make her start and mutter. 'This is something we don't understand. You see here is the mark where she dreamed she was burned, and I dare say if we looked we'd find marks on her head.'

'She can't have burned herself,' said mother, turning; 'there's no fire here.'

'You must have been telling her some of your atrocious yarns,' said I.

'Some of my atrocious yarns, young un!' he exclaimed with some heat. 'I declare—Lotty would bear me out if she were properly awake—I told her nothing of this sort at all; I did certainly mention something about a nigger—that nigger off Cuba. But, my boy, a yarn would never operate in this way, and produce burns and bruises. I say, mother, we must send for Dr. Arnot. There must be something serious the matter with the poor girl. We'd better let her be till he comes, I think.'

Dr. Arnot, a retired hospital lecturer on pathology, who lived in our village and ministered to all the neighbourhood—administering not only physic but also counsel and consolation, much after the manner of Balzac's Dr. Benassis—was sent for, and we sat down to puzzle over the mystery till he should come. Tea was waiting, but we had now no mind or appetite for tea.

'I have read, you know,' said I, '—you must have read it, too, Edward —'

'No,' interrupted he, 'I'm pretty sure I haven't if you've read it; you're a scholar, and our reading does not commonly cross. What is it?'

'Well, that nuns, devout and fasting, by long contemplation of the crucifix have produced the *stigmata*—the marks of the wounds, you know—on their own bodies.'

'But Lotty,' said Edward, 'is not a nun, she does not fast; surely you don't think that she's been contemplating a scarred figure. Still, Jim, lad, I dare say there's something in your idea, if we could find it. Now, you know, I feel almost sure that's a real vision she's had; something is going to happen like that. The green turban, now, maybe you don't think anything of that particular, but I just recollect this: when I used to voyage to the Levant, among all the white and dirty turbans I have seen I never saw one green, but I have heard they are worn on great occasions by those that claim to be direct descendants of the prophet—the false prophet Mahomet, you know. It's a vision, depend on't.'

'But you don't think, do you, that burns would inflict themselves in a vision before they have ever been made?'

'Well,' said Edward, 'we'll hear what Dr. Arnot says.'

Dr. Arnot was very fond of our sister, and he came at once to our summons. In a few minutes more he was ushered into the room where we were. We told him what had happened, and he went and looked at Charlotte.

'Um—m! Feeble pulse, but steady enough. Have you looked at her head?' We had not. He looked, and disclosed a discoloured spot just upon the cerebellum! 'It's very, very remarkable. Mrs. Raven, will you kindly undo her sleeve a little?' He looked closely at the scar. 'It's a most extraordinary case! Never knew anything like it before! She has slept pretty quietly since she spoke to you?'

He stood watching her and holding her wrist for some moments, and then turned away and sat down in silence.

'What do *you* think of it, Doctor?' asked Edward, after a decorous pause. 'I think, you know, it's an extraordinary vision she's had of something that's going to happen to some of us—to me, maybe.'

'Ah, perhaps it is, Captain.'

'Jim there thinks —' and he repeated what I had said.

'Ah,' said he, and gave me a glance of investigation, and turned his chair more towards us, 'that suggestion looks in the



proper direction; your notion, Captain, accounts for the story, but not for the *stigmata*. Let me tell you something which will bring the suggestion a step nearer your sister's case. I knew a lady who one day from the end of the hall saw the door swing-to in a sudden draught upon the fingers of her little boy. She was so struck with horror for the moment that she could not stir nor cry out, but she felt a sudden dart of pain into her own fingers, which made her almost faint. She heard no cry from the door; she went and opened it. The boy was unhurt, but her fingers were as if *they* had been caught in the door, and I thought they had been when I went to see her. I have heard of several similar cases—all women, and women of extreme sensibility. Now,' said he, 'your sister's case is in some of its features like these. She is very sensitive, and her sensitiveness has been increased by'—with a glance at mother—'by recent illness; she has the *stigmata* (or, rather, the *stigma*), and not only the *stigma* but the pain. But, so far as we can see, it wants the most essential point—a sufficient antecedent cause. In the case I have mentioned there was that: the mother saw her boy bruised, as she thought, before her eyes. I can't consider,' said he, turning more particularly to the captain, 'that merely to dream of being stunned and burned is enough to produce marks so very like those of stunning and burning; there must, I think, have been some stronger compelling cause, and what that is we must try to find out. Yes. You don't happen to know,' he asked after a pause, addressing us generally, 'whether there is any one abroad she is very much interested in, and—and who is very much interested in her?'

'A lover, d'you mean?' said Edward, including mother and me in his look of inquiry.

'I don't think there is,' said I.

'I'm sure there's not,' said mother; 'no girl could be freer from such a thing. However, you had better ask her yourself, Doctor, when she wakes.'

'Yes,' said he. 'If you had been abroad now, Captain, I should have had a guess—only a guess, mind—ready at once.'

The maid entered to ask whether we would have tea now. We looked at Dr. Arnot.

'Oh yes,' said he, 'go, go by all means. I shall sit by her till she wakes.'

When we returned he had his note-book on his knee, and he was writing rapidly. We disposed ourselves here and there till he had finished writing and shut up his note-book.

'She has not stirred yet,' said he. 'This is to me the most interesting case I have ever observed; it seems to me quite a new

departure in these strange studies of the marvellous power of the mind over the body. Marvellous? miraculous, some people would call them, because they occur so seldom and are therefore so little understood. In the cases I have known or heard of before, intense sympathy has through *natural* sight set flowing a current of such magnetic force as to make two persons as if they were one.'

'Do you believe in mesmerism, Doctor?' interposed Edward, abruptly.

'Certainly; mesmerism is a fact. Now,' continued he, 'it would be of great interest to discover that intense sympathy could accomplish the same results through clairvoyance instead of through natural sight, and over any distance. I have made very full notes of this case: I shall watch it to the end.'

We three, subdued by these mysterious psychological suggestions, said not a word, but sat in the dim lamp-light looking at each other vacantly, and conjuring up presentments of the person who, the Doctor appeared convinced, must be at the other end of the chain of Charlotte's sympathy.

One hour, two hours passed, and our sister still lay motionless. Mother grew very fidgety, and so did Edward, and asked Dr. Arnot whether he had better do something to rouse her from her sleep. He so far yielded to their urging as to feel her pulse again and to use his stethoscope, but he ended with, 'Wait a little.'

It was nearly nine o'clock when, with a sudden tremor as of fresh life through her limbs and a painful flushing of the face, she opened her eyes and turned towards us. We were eager to question her, but again the Doctor said, 'Wait a little.' He ordered a cup of tea for her. When that was drunk he began gently to question her.

Had she slept quite soundly since her last waking? Quite. No kind of disturbing dream had visited her? None, none at all; her sleep had been quite vacant. Had she any idea what had set her off on that strange dream he had been told of? She could not guess. Would she mind repeating it to him? She told it to him as she had told it to us.

'Now,' said he, 'think; recollect. Is there no one abroad, in the East, perhaps, who has been in your thoughts a good deal lately, in whom you take a great interest, of whom you have thought to-day, maybe?'

She paled a little, glanced at Edward, looked at her hands, shook her head, and said, 'No.'

'You mean,' said the Doctor, 'no one but your brother, who may soon be abroad. You are quite sure there is no one else you are much interested in, who may now be abroad?'

‘Quite sure, Doctor; I have said so,’ she replied, a little petulantly.

‘You will excuse me, my dear,’ said Dr. Arnot; ‘but you know it is not mere curiosity that makes me question you closely, but scientific inquiry; I want to see if there is not some intelligent cause for your strange and very particular dream, and for these very extraordinary marks upon you.’

‘I suppose,’ said she, ‘it is one of those strange things that happen to some people, and that you read about, and that nobody can explain. I wish you would give me something, Dr. Arnot, for these sore places pain me a great deal.’

So nothing came of the Doctor’s inquiry. But, though the pain passed in a day or two from the *stigma*, the scar remained. She seldom left her bed, and when she did, she crept solicitous and cat-like about the house, and cat-like was found gone to sleep in odd corners. She seldom spoke, and when she was spoken to it seemed only with great effort that she gave her attention.

Now I may say, without, I think, appearing too suspicious, that I was convinced from Charlotte’s manner before the Doctor, and from her subsequent behaviour, that she had made some discovery, or that she entertained some guess which she was either afraid or ashamed to impart to any one. I kept my conviction to myself, because I knew that when baldly mentioned it would appear rather baseless, and especially because I could not suggest what her discovery or her guess might be.

But the truth of my conviction was soon established. It would be about a fortnight or three weeks after, that Edward received from Liverpool two letters on the same day, the one offering him the command of a large steamer trading and carrying passengers to Charleston and New Orleans, and the other the command of a steamer trading to Alexandria and the Levant. It was plain the American voyage was likely to be the more profitable, but Charlotte, I noticed, looked in a scared, eager way at Edward and exclaimed:—

‘Don’t take that ship, Edward!’ then she coloured oddly and looked constrained, and added, ‘Is it not much more interesting and safe to sail the Mediterranean and to visit the romantic East than to cross the Atlantic at this time of year and to squabble and haggle with niggers and cotton-salesmen?’

Nothing was said in answer to this, though all three of us were struck by her peculiar manner. This was in the evening. Next morning I was in the ‘book-recess’ of the many-cornered room we called the study, leaning with a book in my hand against the wall and half-hid by a curtain, and Edward was sitting at the table

writing letters, when Charlotte entered. She took up a book and remained standing, but when Edward's glance returned to his writing her eyes turned upon him anxious and eager.

'Are you writing to accept that American ship, Edward?' she asked.

'I am going to, Lotty. Why! what's the matter, my girl?'

'Oh, I don't know what to say! But don't take that ship, Edward!'

'Why, poppet! Have you been thinking something may happen to me? Have you been dreaming again? Come, sit down, my girl.'

She went and stood by him and looked down. 'I have been dreaming again,' said she, 'but the same kind of dream as before. Twice—a week ago and last night—I dreamt I was lying in great distress, with horrible things creeping and crawling about me—ugh! and the face in the green turban came, and he grasped me by the wrist, and then it all dissolved, and I felt somehow I was not myself but some one else; and I'm sure some friend is lying in some horrible prison in the East and wants our help. So if you don't take the ship for the East, Edward, I don't know what I shall do!' And she looked exceedingly distressed.

'But the East, my girl,' said he, 'means a great deal.'

'Couldn't you go to the prisons and find if there was any one you know there?'

'Can I go the round of the prisons and ask, "Is there anybody who knows Captain Raven here?" Even if they would let me enter the prisons, it would take a year or two to go through them—Syria, Egypt, Tripoli, Tunis, and all round where they happen to wear turbans.'

'Is there no particular place where they wear green turbans?'

'Not that I know of.'

'What shall I do? Oh, it will be on my conscience, and he will keep coming to me in dreams! I know he will.'

'He? Who?'

'Who?' she repeated, looking strangely nonplussed, I thought. 'The man in the green turban.'

'Well, my dear,' said Edward, 'you know I'd do anything to save your little finger from an ache. It doesn't matter to me; I'll take the Mediterranean ship, and make inquiries as I go along.'

A little later Edward walked out to the post. I met him, and asked if he had decided on his ship. He told me pretty much what I had overheard.

'It's a pity,' said I, 'Charlotte won't tell you whom she wants you to go in search of.'

'Won't tell me? You don't suppose she can, do you?'

'I think she can, but that for some reason she does not like to.'

He turned about at once and went in again. I followed him. Charlotte had gone to bed again; we went to her room.

'Lotty,' said he, 'you know I'm going to the Mediterranean on your errand; I would take it kind of you, if you can make any sort of guess, that you should tell me whom I am to look for.'

She turned her face to the pillow and burst into tears. 'Oh,' she said, 'I wish I could! I have told you I felt I was some one else, or as if I and some one were—were one, and I thought I turned and turned but could not see the face. Oh, I wish I could tell you, Edward; for if you don't find who it is I shall die! I feel as if that person had my life and were drawing it out of me!'

## II.

In the end of June we received the following letter from Edward:—

's.s. Falcon, Bay of Tangier, Morocco.  
May 20, 187—.

'You will be surprised to receive this letter so soon after my last, with its words of no hope of success. You will see I am out of the Mediterranean. This is how it has come about. The owners having heard, I suppose, of the famine among the Moors, telegraphed to me at Port Said to ship a cargo of grain and come on to Tangier and Mogador. Now, I'm constantly finding out, when I think everything's gone to jumble, that something or other happens that shows me I'm no better than a heathen, and that things in this world really fit and work like the tackling of a ship. That is not a remarkably wise or clear moral, but you'll see presently what I mean.

'I arrived off this port with a fine cargo of wheat yesterday. This morning very early I landed—after being fought for by half a dozen yelling natives—I landed on the back, or rather the shoulders, of a swarthy Moor with a smooth-shaven poll, to which I had to hold on to preserve my balance. Though I had come ashore for business and not for pleasure, I could not help noticing how different the natives look here from what they look in Algiers or in Alexandria, or any of the Mediterranean ports where the Christians are the Mohammedans' masters. They don't scowl at you out of corners or from the walls here, nor rush tearing at you for "back-sheesh"; they sweep along in their white flowing robes and great turbans, proud and indifferent; they're not afraid of you, they don't hate you; they don't care two peas for you; at least, that's

how they struck me. Now, I was walking along, thinking this sort of thing, through the crowd that there always is first thing in the morning,—grave, lanky fellows in turbans; shining, strapping negroes “mid nodings on,” and women with a great deal on, especially about the head, for they take such precautions to hide their face that they forget they are discovering their legs,—well, as I say, I was walking along, sometimes squeezed up against the wall by a groaning camel, sometimes stumbling into a hole in the abominable street or rather lane, when I heard myself hailed—

“Hi! Captain Raven!”

‘I looked round and up, but I could see nobody. But in a twinkling a door close to me opened and a man in European dress flew at me, threw his arms round my neck, and kissed me. You may guess how astonished and put out I felt. Now, who do you think it was? You remember the bonny little German doctor that sailed with me when I was in the Baltic and Archangel trade, and that I brought home with me to see you about two years ago? Well, it was he—Herr Benigsen!

“What the deuce,” I cried, staring at him—“what the deuce are *you* doing here?”

“Me!” said he—“why not I as well as you? But,” said he, “come in here with me, or we shall be trodden to death.”

‘I went in with him, but only for a minute; because, as I told him, my business-man, a Moorish Jew, would be waiting for me.

“It is Moses Secsù, I know,” said he. He noticed that I stared, and he said, “Moses does nearly all this trade you’re in—I know you bring grain from Alexandria. Moses told me; he is of my religion; I know him well. Now you will go on with the man that was guiding you, and I will come at once—at once, my dear friend, and we shall have a big talk.”

‘I went on, and did my business with Secsù. There was not much to be done except to arrange about my unlading. And I was very glad Secsù (a fine man for a Jew) took the trouble of it off my hands, for this Tangier is a beast of a place to land a cargo in; there’s no harbour, no pier, everything has to be beached. (There was a fine pier—a mole once—you can see the ruins of it in the water, built by us English when we possessed Tangier two hundred or so years ago; but when we vacated the town we performed a fine dog-in-the-manger trick worthy of the blessed memory of King Charles the Second—we pulled the mole to pieces, and now we suffer more from its loss than any other people.) Well, I had just about finished, when in comes Benigsen. We had breakfast with the Secsù family, consisting of the father and mother, a clever bright boy of fourteen, who speaks English, and

two fine daughters, with fine eyes that look upon you in a most comforting manner. The house had a central court with a fountain in the middle, and flowers in pots in the English fashion, and a verandah all round. We went out and sat to take coffee and to smoke and talk. Now note me; perhaps I have wearied you a little with my yarn up to this, but the gist of it is coming now.

"But tell me, Doctor," I said to Benigsen, "how it is that I find you in Tangier? When you left my ship you were going to settle down to practise your profession at home in Bavaria, and I find you practising—I don't know what—in Morocco. How comes that about?"

"Ah, my dear friend," said he, "I did say that. But when I got to Munich I could not rest. My father dead, my mother dead, my sister dead—all my family dead except myself. I became very low-spirited. I happened to read the travels of Dr. Gerhard Rohlfs in Morocco—do you know the book?—and I wanted to come here too, especially when I heard that my religionists in this country were in such a bad way. I came to this country like Rohlfs, with only a few moneys in my purse, but my friend here——"

"Pray," said Secsù, "tell the illustrious gentleman, your friend, the story you have to tell, and linger not upon trifles."

"Well," said Benigsen, "I inquired about the best way of getting right into this wonderful country, and I was told by everybody I must become Mohammedan; '*Il faut raser la tête.*' Being a Jew, I could pass for Mohammedan quicker than others if I learnt the language and shaved the head. I lived here with Secsù for six months, and learnt the Moghrebbin, and practised my profession among my people; and then I set out, dressed like a Moor, with a caravan for Fez."

"When was that?" I asked.

"A year ago last April," he answered. "It was all new and beautiful to me to ride along roads that were no roads; to be joined on the way by strangers in their beautiful Moorish dress on horses or mules, with wonderful things to tell and to ask, and to be passed by the silent cavalcade of the harem of an Arab sheikh of the plains all swathed from view, or by a dashing band of horsemen with white flowing haiks——"

"What is a *haik*?" I asked.

"That white bit of stuff you see the Moors wrap about their necks and shoulders, and cover their heads with. I expected to see them all wearing turbans, but they don't wear the turban much."

"Now, that mention of turbans set me off, and I asked him, "Do you ever happen to see *green* turbans about these parts?"

"Very seldom," said he, "and I hope I may never see another."

"My curiosity was roused, as you may guess, thinking of Charlotte, and I asked, "Why? Are you frightened of a green turban?"

"Not frightened; but a green turban will by its sight make me turn *nauseous* to the end of my life; for I was never so near death as when I last saw one. You wish to hear about that? After visiting Fez and Meknez, I thought I should like to do as Rohlfs did, and visit Wazan, the Sacred City, before the rainy season set in. I set out from Meknez, in the company of a Jewish merchant, and after some distance joined a cavalcade of pilgrims from Tafilet, beyond the Atlas, who were travelling to Wazan to see the Grand Shereef, to kiss his hand and to be cured by his touch. They were a wild company, and I do confess I was from the first afraid of them. On the third day I had reason. I had lingered a little behind to examine a plant that looked like a cactus, when I was set upon by three of them and stripped of everything except my shirt and slippers; my mule, my instruments, my money, everything they went off with, and left me lying half senseless and bareheaded in the sun. After a while I woke, with my head burning and throbbing, determined to pursue my way to Wazan and bring my robbers to punishment. I knew I was out of the route to Fez, and that on the bare trackless plain we were traversing there was little hope of coming upon any traveller, or even upon an inhabited *djâr*, but I knew too that Wazan was due north, and I struggled on. Ah, my dear friend, if I could tell you all I did suffer you would not believe I could have suffered and still be sitting here well and glad talking to you. I did not sleep that night; I lay in a delirium. In the morning I found a spring full of tortoises; but that the people like, they say it makes the water good. I drank, and I found some berries and ate. Later in the day I came upon a *djâr* of twelve tents. I received some milk, shelter, and rest for that day and night, and next morning I set out with an additional piece of clothing upon me. Well, I say no more about those days. On the fifth day, about sun-down, I was out of the hot glaring plain, and close to a cool grove of tamarisk trees outside the little white town of Wazan. I plunged into the shade, and as I went deeper I came upon fruit-trees and upon melons. I tore open a melon and drank, and I ate of the delicious fruit and went on. And now through the trees I saw a building; I thought it was a *kubba*, or tomb of a saint, and I took off my slippers, as a true believer should do on holy ground. I pressed on and came out into the open, and then I saw that it was no *kubba* that was



before me, but a magnificent palace—the palace of the Grand Shereef, I guessed. Then, it is impossible to say why, an immense disgust came upon me of my wanderings, and I longed to be out of this lovely, treacherous, lying-in-wait land; I desired wings to fly away, but I was very weary, and I only found a secluded spot to lie down and go to sleep in. I had a little more than laid down when I received a violent blow on the back of the head. I rose to my knees and looked round, and saw standing over me one whom I knew to be a Shereef by his green turban——”

“So you’re the man, then!” I said. “But go on.”

‘He stared at me a moment, and went on.

“——and I knew him to be what they call physician by the figures on his body-dress, and by his pan of charcoal which their physicians always carry. ‘Dog!’ he cried in Moghrebbin, ‘I have followed you; I have found you out! See!’ and he pointed to my feet. ‘Has a true believer hard things on his toes, or the toes crooked as you have? You are a Christian! You shall not longer deceive the people with your N’zarenny sorcery!’ With that he seized me by the neck, held my arms to my sides with his knees, and snatched a red-hot iron from his pan. I struggled and got one hand free, and the iron that was intended for my eyes burned this hand, as you see. I was struggling still more when I saw a man of fine figure and of pure white dress pass slowly near the palace, and I called aloud, ‘Abd-es-Salam! Abd-es-Salam!’ That is the name of the Grand Shereef, and I guessed the man may be he, and so I cry aloud; for it is the law, or the custom, that if you see the Sultan or the Grand Shereef, and call upon his name, he must consider your case.”

“Just so,” said I. “It came all right, of course, or you wouldn’t be here. Now,” said I, “Dr. Benigsen, I have always liked you, and I won’t use strong language to you, especially considering you had such a shave; but why the devil couldn’t you get through your trouble without bothering my sister about it?”

“Your sister?” You should have seen him look at me, and from me to Seesù. “It is impossible for me to understand what you mean.”

“Now,” said I, “that happened last October, you said; October the twenty-fourth.”

“Perhaps; it was one day in the end of October,” said he.

“Now,” said I, “don’t try to get out of it. On that same day, and at the same hour, my sister Charlotte saw and felt the same things as you saw and felt;” and I told him all about it.

“It is,” said he, “a very remarkable coincidence.”

“Coincidence be hanged!” said I. “You did it, if a doctor’s

word and your own evidence is worth anything!" (I was getting warm, you see, and he was getting to look cold and pale.) "Dr. Arnot," said I, "a clever man—you know him—said that only to dream of stunning, and burning, and stabbing is not enough to produce the effect of all the three; he said the only way was for some strong sympathy, he called it, to be between the girl and some one else to carry the effect from one to the other along the string. The girl didn't know anything of where you were or what was happening to you, though I suspect she must have thought of you sometimes, so you must have telegraphed, so to speak, the things on. And a mean, cowardly thing," said I, "I think it is, Benigsen, that you should put your troubles on my sister—try to put your pains on her. That's what I think of it; and a very shabby business it is, in my opinion."

"He looked at me. "But," said I, "look as you like, you can't look me out of that, especially when I know you've been at my sister several times since, troubling and upsetting her. It may be going on yet for all I know. You must give me some sort of satisfaction, Benigsen, now that I have found you, that you will not trouble the girl in that way any more."

"Captain Raven," said he, "I will, when you prove to me that I have done anything of my own will to trouble her. Your sister, —I will confess I have sometimes thought of her since I saw her and talk with her in your English home, but I have never anything besides. And this doctor who talks about sympathies and clairvoyance—I remember him—a foolish idealist, who would like to believe in spirit raps and media, and to explain them by pseudo-science! Pif! I am man of science and doctor myself, and I promise—here, before Moses Secsù—that if I do not prove to you that your sister's strange vision and marks were not due to me, I will give her 5,000*l.* on her wedding-day. Oh yes, I have the money to command; I am just preparing to leave Tangier to attend to the estate of my uncle newly dead."

"Well," said I, thinking perhaps we had not seen properly into things, "there's often more inside to dreams than people guess; how will you prove it?"

"Oh," said he, "I must come with you to your home in England and look into the matter myself. You are going home," said he, "after you have been to Mogador; I am going to Bavaria now, to act according to my uncle's will. Meet me in London—when?"

'So I invited him, you see, not to wait to meet me in London, but to go straight on home and meet me there on September 5, the day before Charlotte's birthday.'

I need not quote this long epistle further. With its arrival Charlotte, who was still troubled at frequent intervals by the extraordinary vision, began to improve, and to look forward with feelings of her own, I thought, to September 5. There had been no need to ask her if Benigsen had never been in her thoughts before she had that peculiar vision; her tell-tale face when the letter was read sufficiently proclaimed that he had occupied her thoughts a good deal; still, when the question was put to her, Had she not known whom her dream concerned? she protested she had not, though she might have had more than one vague and troublesome guess.

I must say I was surprised, for my part, at Edward's simplicity in not suspecting (as he appeared not to suspect) that the ready offer of this German-Jewish doctor to come to our house to explain the mystery was not so much prompted by love of science as by love of a 'handmaid' more attractive to young blood. I was not disposed (any more than I suppose Charlotte was) to blame the adventurous doctor for his lack of openness; for, first of all, love delights in subterfuge, and then there were special reasons why he should say nothing to Edward of his love (supposing always he did love Charlotte); for he was not only a foreigner, but of a race with which, he doubtless knew, old-fashioned English-folk are averse to intermarriage; and, after the peculiar revelations of Charlotte's inclination to him, he might wish to assure himself by sight and speech that he was still of the same mind regarding her before he should commit himself to an express proposal.

We were an anxious household that on September 5 awaited Benigsen's arrival. Edward had come home the day before, and seeing the remarkable change in Charlotte and her manifest flutter of shame and love, fear and hope, he had looked around on us with the open looks of a discoverer, and exclaimed, with seaman-like frankness and irrelevance, 'Well, I'm blest!' On the 5th it was evident his sudden discovery weighed upon him, and in a moment of confidence he remarked to me:—

'She seems to like it; I don't. I hope he won't come. I was a fool to ask him; I should have seen his drift. I don't believe he'll have any explanation to give at all, except that absurd mesmerism, clairvoyance, or something of the sort!'

Yet he set out to meet Benigsen at the station, and in due course returned with him.

Dr. Arnot was invited and came to hear the promised explanation in the evening. In the meantime Benigsen had had a private conference with Charlotte, to receive from her own lips, he said,

the story of her dream. It is probable that the story had been accompanied by something else from her lips, for upon entering the drawing-room he beckoned Edward and me aside and said he had our sister's permission to inform us that if he gave a rational explanation of the vision which still haunted her, and if he could banish it from her, then in two months she would listen to certain proposals of—of love and so forth. Did we object? he asked. No, we could not object.

'Did you propose the two-months' bargain?' I asked.

'I did,' he answered.

'I thought,' said I, 'it did not look like an arrangement Charlotte would make.'

'Do you think,' said he, 'she would have herself proposed a longer time—a harder bargain?'

'On the contrary,' said I; 'I think she would not herself have proposed a bargain at all.'

He looked at me dolefully, and we turned for the explanation. He asked us to accompany him to a room he had been shown at his request—mother's room.

'Now,' said he, with a glance aside at Dr. Arnot, 'I do not deny the supernatural; I only say I know nothing about it. But I know a little of the natural; I think it, therefore, my duty, as a man of science, to understand and explain, if I can, anything out of the common rather by things which I do know than by things which I do not know.' That, thought I, sounds very clear and fair. 'It is important to remember,' he continued, 'that Miss Charlotte did spend great part of every day and night of three months in this room——'

'Yes, poor girl,' said mother, 'that she did.'

'And that on October 24 she had gone out for a long walk for the first time for many, many days. She was very tired when she returned, and she went to bed. Her mind was not weary, though her body was, and the open light of out-of-doors——'

'It was a very dull day,' said I.

'The open light,' he continued, 'stimulated the sense of sight, stirred up and made as if it were alive the stored images of the retina.' (At this Dr. Arnot looked up with a frown of inquiry.) 'Now place this lamp and shade where it usually stood on this table, and sit any one here where Miss Charlotte usually sat; now look there at that figure on the carpet close to the curtain where the light falls; does it not look like a dark angry face with a black beard, and does not the bottom of the green curtain, arranged so, appear like a green turban upon the head?'

We each went to the proper place to look, and confessed that

it was very easy to see, where the light fell, a dark face and green turban; Charlotte even recollected—at least, said she recollected—having noticed the appearance sometimes when sitting with her mother.

‘She could not help but see it,’ said Benigsen, triumphantly, ‘it is so clear. Now, my next point,’ said he, ‘is more difficult. Miss Charlotte’s mother has made the admission to me that her daughter—she supposes from waiting so closely on her night and day so long, and from rising up often not more than half awake to get her something—has frequently walked in sleep from one part of the room to another, or from her own room to her mother’s, without any one but her mother knowing of it; that is not to be surprised at, for a lady does not like to have it known. Well, when she went to bed that afternoon there was a fire in her room, although there was none when she woke up and when her brother came in; she knows there was a fire, because she remembers burning a paper in it before she went into bed. Now, from the nature of the case, I cannot make a demonstration, I can only present a suggestion; and first I would beg to ask the young lady a question: Did she not wish afterwards that she had not burned that paper?—I know not what the paper was.’

Charlotte blushed and looked down in confusion and said, ‘Yes.’

‘So,’ continued he, ‘may not she, wishing that in her sleep, have got out of her bed and gone to the fire thinking to take back her letter from the ashes, and so have burned her wrist on the hot bar of the grate? Now, metaphysicians,’ said he, with another glance at Dr. Arnot, ‘have long noted that a dream that seems to involve a long train of events sometimes occupies no more than a single moment of actual time. For instance, a pistol report that really awoke the sleeper has been known to give him an instantaneous yet apparently drawn-out series of adventures, including a quarrel, a challenge, and a duel. The burn on Miss Charlotte’s wrist (I suggest it), acting through the sense of touch upon an aching cerebellum, weary limbs, and stimulated sight, produced on the instant the story we have heard: the coming in from a wide sandy plain (she had been on the sands in the afternoon), the appearance of a shining palace (which this house may have when the sun is on it), the blow on the head, the face with the green turban, the almost ineffectual struggle of the weary limbs, the hot iron to put out the eyes, and the burn on the wrist. I would beg you to note,’ continued he with a more particular inclination towards Dr. Arnot, ‘as an important medical diagnostic, that the man in the turban *did not speak*; I take that and the brightness and variety of the

colours seen in the dream as evidence of the truth of my suggestion that the whole mystery is due after the burn to the stimulation of deranged sight.'

He sat down. We looked at the presentment of the face and the green turban on the floor, and then we looked at each other.

'Um—m,' said Dr. Arnot to us in a low tone, 'it seems very plausible. The chief thing,' he continued, raising his voice, 'I find against your theory, Dr. Benigsen, is your own experience of the same things in actuality at the same hour, though at a great distance.'

'To that,' said Benigsen, 'I would answer, as a famous doctor did in a similar case, that the fact that my adventures befell then instead of at some other time cannot affect this lady's case one way or the other, any more than it can affect the doctrine of chances.'

'But, hang it!' exclaimed Edward, 'if you should both have been thinking of each other at that time, wouldn't sympathy and that sort of thing——'

'Oh,' interposed Benigsen, 'if you like that explanation better, I do not object.'

'But,' said I, 'how do you account for the frequent repetition of the vision?'

'By the fact,' answered he, 'that it had appeared once and had produced a very great impression. It won't,' he added with a smile, 'appear again.'

And it did not; and in less than the two months' space our sister Charlotte was Frau Benigsen.

J. MACLAREN COBBAN.

## The Queen of Watering Places.

IN the centre of the old Steyne rises a rather smirking statue of his late Majesty George IV. of sybaritic memory, in the act of addressing an affectionate '*God bless you!*' which he was so fond of, to the town in general. No image ever so deserved its position: for Brighton, though it does not owe everything to him, certainly owes forty years' earlier prosperity to his patronage, and might have remained unhonoured and unpatronised, till within living memory. In full view of the First Gentleman rise the domes and pinnacles of his '*Folly*,' that strangest and costliest of all Royal hobbies, the Pavilion. Towards his right he stares in the direction of even a yet more interesting memorial—a verandahed building—once the residence of the '*fat, fair, and forty*' dame, Mrs. Fitzherbert, built specially for her by her royal admirer, and now the Brighton Club. Here, in the circular boudoirs and more spacious chambers where she entertained the town at balls and routs, or received her royal admirer *en partie fine*, are now celebrated the coarser joys of club life: the idler lounges, or the sound of the billiard ball is heard. In the sort of hutch where the porter sits is a small secret stair running up to the top of the house, and a legend of the establishment runs, that a subterranean passage can be traced below ground which leads to the Pavilion. The mansion has a spacious old-fashioned air: lofty rooms, and a fine stair. Here the gayest of mature dames lived many a year, and received the *élite* of Brighton. No one, however familiar with the career of the Regent, his revels, theatrical splendours, spendthrift magnificence, and sultanic pleasures, but must feel a strange thrill—something akin to the wholesome effect of a good and improving sermon—as he leisurely surveys the faded glories of his Palace. The great satrap, who spent and spared himself nothing, who made the nation pay all his enormous debts over and over again, who '*required*' everything for his service, whom all men and women flattered and extolled to the hour of his death, the finest, most superlative, courtly, elegant, and gracious of earthly monarchs, is here revealed in the dull tawdry ornaments of the place, reputed to have cost about half a million, but which seems scarcely to represent the outlay of twenty or thirty thousand pounds. As is well known, these enormous sums were all owing to the constant alterations, changes, and rebuildings which the capricious owner indulged himself with. Yet, abused as this

building has been, described as the apotheosis of gimcrackery, there is a certain grandeur and imposing effect as we walk through its halls. We have only to supply the blaze of fresh gold and silver, the brightness of the Chinese crimsons and yellows, the glitter of the glass drops and the chandeliers, the rich carpetings and hangings, the lights, the flowers, to call up all the magnificence of the Pavilion in its palmy days. The two great rooms, the banqueting and the music rooms, are truly grand in their lofty proportions; and certainly there is something original in the solid architectural treatment of this nondescript 'Chinese' style—the bold convexities and curves of the ceilings—which is very different from the flimsy theatrical effects of modern Eastern art. There are vividly tinted pictures showing some scenes of high state revels, when the company was assembled at dinner or to hear the music of his Majesty's band. We see the company in court dresses—the banquet being served by an army of servants, the whole a blaze of light and glory; and it should be noted with what an imposing effect the enormous chandeliers are disposed and made part of the general design—being quite barbaric in their dragons and vast spreading leaves; an enormous one in the centre hanging down like a vast shell, with four others in the corners. Other rooms, such as the circular drawing-room, and the other drawing-room, purposely made low, and supported by palm-tree pillars, have a certain elegance of design—being on a level with the grass sward and the charming gardens as they must have once existed. It seems astonishing now, how execrable was the fashion of stained glass painting then in vogue, so poor and scratchy that a contract builder would disdain to use it for a greenhouse or a hall. So too with the scraps of Chinese cornices, the elegant 'bamboo' work of cast iron (which excited the raptures of the art critics) introduced everywhere, and then thought to be '*prodigious fine*.'

It is evident that what was called complimentarily 'the taste' of his Royal Highness dictated nearly all these freaks, and a capital key to what was working in the Regent soul is found in what is recorded of the 'graining' of the doors near the entrance. It seems that when the painters were away at their dinners, a boy who was employed in another part of the building amused himself by continuing the 'graining' of the wood, only making the veins of the wood take the shape of reptiles and Chinese beasts. While engaged on this pastime, his Royal Highness chanced to come by, and was so delighted with the novelty of the idea—any freak always entranced him—that he gave orders that the whole should be carried on after the same fashion, and by that particular workman. This is really a key to his character as



well as to the mysterious construction of this Pavilion—which he seems to have carried out consistently, for the simple pleasure of altering and shaping according to every whim or ‘fad’ that occurred to him. There is little doubt, too, but that all concerned ministered to and stimulated his fancies by obsequious praise. He was extolled as a miracle of exquisite taste, though all his devices are rather what the ‘property man’ of a theatre would have suggested.

Thus, when a large parcel of ‘beautiful Chinese paper’ was made a present to him, the idea suggested itself of forming a Chinese gallery for the paper: reversing the usual process—papering being adapted to the room, not the room to the paper. This corridor was described at the time of its completion in 1816 ‘as one of the most superb apartments that art and fancy could produce.’ Nothing in worse taste could be conceived than the chandelier, shaped like a slop-basin, in the cupola of the poorest stained glass, representing ‘Lin-shin, the god of thunder,’ from whose painted hand hangs the ‘magnificent bowl-shaped chandelier’ aforesaid. A pleasing and elegant effect, clearly owing to the suggestion of the First Gentleman himself, was produced by means of glass doors, which could be made to inclose the centre portion of the gallery, shutting it off into a small room or transparent lantern of stained glass. It is amusing to read, in the accounts of the day, the raptures of admiration into which this clumsy device threw the critics—who were equally enamoured of the ‘bamboo’ ornaments before described, of the dragons holding lamps, and of other devices. The sort of haphazard, capricious style in which he exercised his taste may be understood from the following: ‘The beautiful pheasants on the rock to the right of the superb painting which adorns the south wall of this room were an after-thought to the original design. The Prince of Wales, with a distinguished party, was one day inspecting the room, and, while Lambelet was engaged on the above painting, the Prince remarked to him, on passing, that the rock looked somewhat naked. On his Royal Highness’s return, the artist had sketched in the pheasants, his skill and good taste evoking the highest compliment from the Prince.’

The spirit in which the later municipal authorities attempted what they call ‘renovations’ may be conceived from the following specimen. The imposing and gaudy banqueting room is set off by Chinese figures the size of life, carrying banners or screens; and as one might admire or wonder at these objects, it was impossible not to be struck by an unmistakable British face of the licensed-victualler pattern, which showed itself from beneath one

of the peaked caps of the celestials, and suggested Benjamin Bowbell in the 'Illustrious Stranger.' Ruminating in perplexity over this contradiction, and setting it down as a further specimen of the bad taste of the First Gentleman, I turned to the catalogue, and, to my surprise, read the explanation: 'The face of one of them—that at the north-east corner, the left-hand side of the windows—having been accidentally destroyed, it had, necessarily, to be repainted; and the idea suggesting itself that the head of the late custodian of the Pavilion, Mr. Francis Edmund De Val, would well fit the shoulders of the decapitated Chinaman, it was accordingly painted in, and is a very faithful likeness.' Admirably as Mr. De Val's features suit the Chinese costume, their adaptability does not comprise the chief merit of the 'happy thought' which led to their being painted. The town is in a great measure indebted to Mr. De Val for the restoration of the original decorations of the Pavilion; and his portrait now forms an appropriate and deserving recognition of services rendered. Mr. Kramer, the chief musician, was also proprietor of a china and glass warehouse in North Street, Brighton, in which he was assisted by Mr. De Val, who had frequently to attend at the palace in consequence. On one occasion, De Val placed some goods which he brought from Kramer's upon a bench near to where a French cook was standing. The latter took offence at this, and struck De Val with a stone pestle which he held in his hand; on which De Val, with true English spirit, knocked the Frenchman down, amidst the cries of 'Bravo, Johnny Bœuf,' from the other French cooks. 'The King, hearing of De Val's exploit, expressed a wish to see him, and he was thereupon introduced by Mr. Kramer to his Majesty, with whom he afterwards became a great favourite.' But the guess at the public-house character of the features which decorate the walls, and which must irresistibly strike every spectator, is strangely corroborated by the following: 'Mr. De Val's is not the only portrait, for the artists who painted the groups around the room were supplied with living models, one of whom was a licensed victualler, carrying on business at the time just outside the eastern boundary of the parish.'

And yet this curious 'Folly' has a certain character and attraction, owing to the fashion in which it gradually took shape and grew. Any building that honestly represents the mind and feelings of its owner acquires a sort of vitality. As it stands now it represents a series of alterations and additions, a gradual development and enlargement, for which space was found by continued demolitions and removals. The Prince in 1783 came down to Brighton on his first visit to the Duke of Cumberland, and found

the place little more than a fishing village, the space round the present Pavilion being all open down to the sea. There are pictures of it at this time, which show it as little more than a few cottages and houses. He was so pleased with his stay of a fortnight that he came again the following year, and this time took a house for himself, belonging to one Mr. Kemp—whose name still lives in the quarter called Kemp Town. This was on the ground of the present Pavilion. Almost at once the building mania seized on him, and a kind of circular building, with a cupola in the centre, flanked by two wings, was soon reared. As his love and craze for the place increased, the additions and alterations developed. In 1803 the 'Rotunda'—meant for stables or a riding-school, now a concert-room, and oddly called 'The Dome'—was begun. This simple edifice took six years to complete, and cost the amazing sum of 70,000*l*. He was perpetually buying additional land, and houses—to be pulled down. High roads were, with much good-natured accommodation on the part of the natives, given up to him and taken into his demesne; new wings begun. Wyatt and Nash, eminent architects, were employed: and the wonder of the problem is that, with this incessant work, the whole was actually not completed till after his death.

Another odd feature of the Prince's Brighton mania was his craze for hurrying down there, or quitting it, at a mad headlong pace; he would rush away 'express,' not displeased to have the excuse of sickness of a relative, travel all night in a light carriage manufactured and designed expressly for these flights, and would return in the same headlong style. When the Duke of York was dying, he came to London from Brighton in little over five hours. It is extraordinary, indeed, how much more rapidly than would be imagined now, the ground was covered by means of posting or fast coaches.

There is a museum of pictures in the Pavilion, not uninteresting, as showing what the Brighton of old days was. But no local museum can keep clear of the stuffed animals and birds or of the Indian arrows and canoes. Every admirer of Little Pedlington will recall the parish stocks, placed there by Rummins, I think, with a suitable inscription. But this could be matched by a sacred relic, hung up and preserved in our museum, with its inscription. This was a piece of rough wood, with a direction on it such as is found on a packing case, but the entry in the catalogue is too good not to be quoted: 'Crossing the room again to the opening on the south side, the visitor enters a small room containing suits of armour; where also is shown a piece of the paper originally decorating the walls of that identical apartment, together

with the direction, dated Nov. 1st, 1819, to "H.R.H. Prince Regent, Pavilion, Brighton. For paper hangers. By Crossweller's coach."

The later history of the Pavilion is this. After the death of George IV., King William for a time seemed to fancy it, and made some additions, including a rather imposing gateway, on which he characteristically took care to inscribe his own name in large characters. Her present Majesty was received on her visit to Brighton with 'tumultuous demonstrations of joy'—and the Brightonians fondly imagined that she would reside here occasionally, like George the 'well-beloved,' her uncle. To their mortification, however, it was found that her Majesty had in 1844 abandoned the Pavilion altogether as a marine residence; not so much, it is carefully added, from a dislike to the edifice itself or to Brighton, as 'in consequence of the great increase of the town, which had grown round the Pavilion to such an extent, that it was impossible to catch more than a glimpse of the sea from some of the upper windows.'

In 1846-48 the Pavilion was completely dismantled by 'royal authority'; the organ of the Royal Chapel (now placed in the Music-room) being presented to the town by her Majesty. In 1850 the town purchased the Pavilion for 53,000*l.*; and the repairing and re-decoration of the rooms being immediately proceeded with, the edifice was reopened on the 21st of January, 1851. In 1863 they obtained from the Crown many of the original decorations of the Pavilion.

It is only when we compare English and French watering places, and the sort of glittering pre-eminence claimed for the latter, that we see how truly modest and deferential is the Englishman in accepting second place, in points where he is so eminently superior. Ostend, Dieppe, Boulogne, Biarritz, with their few hundred yards of villas, are as nothing compared with the miles of mansions that fringe the sea at Brighton and Hastings. To stand at the extremity of the new pier, and let the eye range along the unbroken rows of terraces, gay, bright, and glittering in the sun, which stretch from Hove to Kemp Town, is indeed an imposing as well as an inspiring sight. It is as festive as the gala terraces of hotels and villas at Blankenberg, only extended for many a mile. Nor is the arrangement and 'laying out' without a certain quaint fitness and effect. Regency Square, Brunswick Square, the King's Road, Montpelier Terrace, the names of the Inns, the Lion Mansions, and the rest, all have a certain appropriateness which calls up the past and old associations.

It has always seemed odd that for so modern a place, which has

not been flourishing beyond a hundred years, Brighton should have so ancient and *rococo* an air. It abounds in bow-fronted houses, which recur with sad monotony, and give a sort of seafaring, smuggling look to the whole. What dictated this fashion it is hard to conceive: the usual aim is to contrive glimpses of the sea: but it is carried out at Brighton in strictly inland quarters (so giving the idea of frilling), where there is no sign of water.

I do not know whether the feeling be universal, but it has always seemed to me that the alluring programmes of amusement set out at such places have a dispiriting effect.

All early mornings by the sea are delightful—that first early freshness stimulates as a bath; but a fine Brighton morning about seven, when you issue forth direct upon the shore, is truly inspiring. The sea is always company, but at this hour it is most attractive; for on one of your sultry sunshiny days it offers a rather tame and languid monotony. But of a morning it is in its more piquant mood. Far down are the fishing-boats just come in, being hauled up on the shingle by the somewhat primitive agency of a slow moving capstan, worked by a couple of horses. We look down, too, on a sort of fish market, where sales are brisk, but the stock in demand seems to be the monotonous scallop, which abounds here. I confess that the Aquarium is always a depressing place, from no fault of its own. Aquaria cannot help being aquaria: 'tis their nature to dispirit, in common with crystal palaces and picture galleries. The sight-seers, who have come it may be from London, for a day at the seaside, wander in, the father holding the little girl's hand, with a vacant, hopeless look. Nothing could arouse him after the native monotonous series of tanks.

It is curious to note the abundance of newspapers in this flourishing sea-town, though it may be doubted if the town gives them much hearty support. These for the most part affect a gay, jaunty tone, as if from 'rollicking' spirits: 'The Brighton Gazette,' 'The Brightonian,' 'The Dolphin,' 'The Brighton Times,' &c.; most of them aiming at a 'society journal' tone. All local humour, somehow, depresses, and seems to belong to Little Pedlington; and local indignation against oppression or shame excites not sympathy but the reverse. Yet it is wonderful how prodigiously the sarcastic allusion in the local paper tells, what a sensation it causes, and how it is relished. 'Did you sec about Smith in the "Brightonian"?' asks your friend, with the comment either that it was scandalous the way 'people were dragged before the public,' or else that it 'ought to have been sent to "Punch,"' a form of praise much used over the kingdom, and which in its results entails a vast amount of extra work on the facetious Mr. Burnand. But of all the

exhibitions of local foolishness commend us to a Brighton institution yecept the Brighton Debating Society, which appears to be formed of grown men, and who have formed themselves into a regular parliament, with treasury bench and opposition, members of the cabinet and high government officials.

Hotels, as may be well imagined, must flourish along this extended seaboard. There is an endless variety, from the beetling spacious Grand Hotel to the modest boarding-house. There is the Bedford, with its calm aristocratic dignity or reserve, a hostelry suited for 'a nobleman, gentleman, or bachelor of position,' as an auctioneer put it. There is the Old Ship, with its bow windows to the sea like the stern of a hulk—a house which has a curiously cozy air of old-fashioned snugness and comfort; and here, too, you can have good old wine, as well as good old company, for it is the resort of certain London veteran actors and *littérateurs*. There is the New Ship in a by-street, which is old enough in its way; the Albion, Norfolk, and many more. The 'Mansion or Private Hotel' is in high vogue, as well as the 'Boarding-house,' where the guests seem to stand at the door with an affectation of domestic happiness and enjoyment of each other's society which probably they do not feel. It requires a peculiarly constituted mind to relish the necessary familiarity of the boarding-house; to some it would be simply odious, and nothing would be in greater contrast to it than the expansion of the new great hotels; where you can diffuse yourself in great apartments, and be as far as you please from your species. There are numbers, however, cheerful souls, who relish the strict *camaraderie* of the boarding-house; they come down in the morning to the small bow-windowed room, sit at the public breakfast-table, and laugh and joke with every one like 'dear friends.' And there is a philosophy in this, as may be learned by observation: it is a cheap and happy securing of society and its charms—an item which is paid for and included in the bill. For those whose taste lies that way, I could imagine that it might be enjoyable, and that there was variety and change, and refuge from the blue devils. Any one who lives much in large hotels will find that peculiar form of life fosters a dislike of your species, in exact proportion as the amplitude of the place enables you, in nautical phrase, to 'fend them' off. Paradoxical as it may seem, the less you come in contact with them, the less you like them. This feeling, I fancy, arises from the perpetual succession of new faces, the ceaseless 'writing in the sand,' making of a new acquaintance ('scraping,' it is called) with your new neighbour at the table d'hôte, an acquaintanceship dissolved almost as soon as made, the work having to be begun again.

This great Brighton hotel is not a bad school for studying life and character; indeed, it has sufficient reputation to have had its hall selected as the scene of a boisterous Criterion play, where the lively Wyndham as the philandering Bob Sackett met so many of the 'most charming women he ever met.' This great thoroughfare is surrounded by comfortable ottomans, on which reclined you can watch the perpetual *va et vient*, the door ever shutting, to be opened again by the nimble and alert pages, while the guest struts in with a happy air of state, as into his own castle. Before dinner the great curtains are drawn before the doors to exclude draught and cold, and the whole becomes a pleasant apartment, every one sitting round and laughing or criticising. Then notes and comments chiefly turn upon the personages and characters of the panorama;—who was the unaccountable widow—the reserved fat man—the merry family ('we are, we are'), and the rest. Who will forget the tremendous 'kettle of fish'—the suspected waiter and the lost bit of candle—for which he was brought up and sentenced, and upon which the House divided into factions, some taking sides with the persecuted waiter, others with the manager, who brought him to justice? Throughout the day or days you heard, 'a shame!' 'poor wife without a penny,' 'brought before Parliament'; 'serve him right.' Feelings of this acute sort can be shown but in one way, and presently an energetic woman or two is seen offering a sheet of foolscap, collecting signatures and subscriptions. It is boasted before the end of the day that five pounds have been got.

PERCY FITZGERALD.

## The Admiral's Ward.

BY MRS. ALEXANDER.

### CHAPTER XLV.

It was the third day after the poor little baby had been laid in its last resting place, and the mother's first vehement grief had settled down into deep, silent sadness. Laura had vainly attempted to interest her in various subjects, and urged her at least to write to her mother-in-law, from whom she had received a long tearful letter full of affectionate sympathy.

Winifrid rejected all suggestions, and entreated Laura to write to Mrs. Piers for her. 'I cannot; yet I do not like her to be neglected, and I am sure Reginald will not write.'

'Why?'

'Because he never does anything he can possibly help, except to amuse himself, and yet he is not happy; I am sometimes grieved for him. What has changed him, Laura? I often sit and wonder, when I am alone.'

'But *is* he so changed, Winnie?'

'Can you not see that he is? He only dined with us once since you came; he cannot bear to be without company. To be sure I am dull and wearisome, but that is not my fault. He used to be so full of kind consideration. I think at times that some spell has been laid upon him—that he is not quite responsible.'

'That is nonsense, Winnie dear; what do you mean?'

'I mean that I have quite given up the struggle I was so fierce and eager about when we parted, Laura. I cannot stand against that woman's influence. I suppose there is something wanting in myself, some power of sympathy, of companionship; I cannot find out what. Once I fancied I was everything to him; I end by being nothing.'

'Are you not morbid and worn out with grief, dear Winnie, to fancy such things?'

'Yes, I dare say I am; but it is not just now these ideas have taken hold upon me. Only while I had my baby I had something to endure for, to keep up appearances for; I was determined to bear much, everything save one.'

'And what was that?'

'To have the society of a bad, treacherous, relentless woman forced upon me, in order to shelter *her* reputation. She has got



fast hold of Reginald, at any rate for the present. He may weary of her, or she of him, or some change may bring him back to me, and I do not say I should be hard or unforgiving. Better and more charming women than I am, or ever will be, have been deserted before this; but we—I never can feel quite what I did—we shall never be quite the same to each other!’ She stopped with a deep sigh.

‘Winnie, dear, this is too dreadful. “Never” is a terrible word, and you say it so quietly.’

‘The quiet of exhaustion,’ she returned, leaning back among the sofa cushions, with an air of unutterable weariness. ‘If you only knew the fiery battle I fought at Franzinsbad and Vienna! It is a relief to talk to you, Laura, you are so safe, and I do not want to abuse Reginald! He was so dear, so charming to me once! and I do not seem to have lost my affection for him, though lately it has been rudely shaken.’

She paused, looking out of her large soft eyes as if at some distant object.

‘Yes, open your heart to me,’ cried Laura, with a sob she could not suppress; so deeply was she touched, by the hopelessness of Winifrid’s voice and attitude.

‘You know,’ she resumed in the same sad monotone, ‘we were all well and happy at Franzinsbad; that is scarcely three months ago, and it seems gone away back into bygone ages. Helen was very kind and pleasant, and Reginald was a little cross sometimes, but nothing worth mentioning. Then he went away to a hunting party at Graf Wielizka’s place; I was very glad he had some sport after having lost the Pierslynn shooting on my account. He stayed longer than I expected, and only wrote twice. I did not mind that; he seemed enjoying himself, and I was happy with Helen.

‘He did not return till two days after she left; then he looked ill, and was not quite like himself.

‘The evening after he came back, he was talking very pleasantly, describing the shooting and the dinners, where the men evidently drank too much, and played too high afterwards, when he suddenly exclaimed: “By the way, our friend Madame Moscynski turned up at Schloss Wielizka; the Gräfin is her cousin, and she was a host in herself.”

‘I felt as if I had a sudden stab; I could not speak, and he went on: “Madame Wielizka is in delicate health, so she begged me to find quarters for her here, she and a little boy of hers; and the Princess with that singing fellow Bariatowski are coming here on Thursday; we must see what we can find for them to-morrow.”’

'Was Reginald not aware of your objection to Madame Moscyński?' asked Laura.

'He was; but I then opened my mind fully to him. I did not go wild as I did afterwards; I told him I could not and would not associate with this woman! I begged of him to leave the place; I promised that I would do nothing rude and create no *esclandre*, if on his part he would promise to come away within a week after she came.'

'Did he promise?' asked Laura.

'He did, laughing as if it were a silly whim of mine; provided, he said, I was still in the same mind after the arrival of so pleasant a party.'

'Well, they came. I fulfilled my part; though as stiff and distant as possible, I did not *cut* Madame Moscyński. Then a dreadful struggle began. I could *not* induce Reginald to leave; I had almost to stay in my own room to avoid that woman. I had scenes with my husband; I found he was losing heaps of money to those dreadful men who are about Madame Moscyński. I wrote you some account of all this, but you never had the letter, it seems.

'It was a dreadful time! I never knew if I were acting wisely or not. I felt I was right, and I was perpetually being put in the wrong. At last Reginald said one morning that we should start for Vienna; but I had lost hope, I did not seem to care. However, she did not appear there, and I tried to be friendly with Reginald, and sometimes he would be nice and sometimes quite wildly gay; often I feared he drank too much, he had fallen among such dreadful people. After about three weeks we came on here, and found Madame Moscyński installed in the next street. Here her audacity knew no bounds. I implored Reginald to come home; then suddenly it came to me that I was losing myself in such a struggle, so I gave it up; only I would not see Madame Moscyński. But when baby was ill, and I almost lost my head, she came in and out, I was vaguely conscious of her, and I am sure she gave the people in the hotel the idea of being my best friend. I wrote to you; you did not come. One day—the last day—Farrar, who has been such a good kind help all through, rushed to me, and said: "Colonel Bligh is in the *salon* alone; beg of him to go and see Miss Piers in London; I believe he is going to leave Paris." I ran to him and had just time to say I do not know what, when Reginald came in; then I was back with baby, who soon ceased to cry or moan, and then there is a blank till I had the comfort of hearing your voice. Laura, you must stay with me!'

'I will! Winnie, dear Winnie, I think I shall be able to help you; I will venture to speak to Reginald.'

'You had better not!' said his wife, despondingly; 'nothing can do any good. The night my little darling died he was so kind and tender to me (I do not think he cared much about the baby), I hoped for a moment that he was going to be himself again; but before he left me he asked me if Madame Moscynski, who had been so good and interested in me, should get me all that was necessary. I only said, "I will not see her, do not let her come near me," and I have *not* seen her; and though I, the mother of his boy, am bowed to the earth with grief for its death, he can resent that refusal. It is this that has suddenly chilled me, and makes me doubt if there is true love in his nature; that woman has utterly mastered him. People laugh at jealousy; they say it is mean, narrow. Perhaps it is; a jealous wife excites a sort of contemptuous pity; but is there a more desolate creature on earth than a wife left, as *I* am left, without hope, without redress? For if another woman is more charming and suitable to my husband, can he help loving her better than he does me? only he ought not to, and he *shall* not, force her upon me; that I will resist.'

She ceased to speak, and sat long in dead silence, her eyes closed apparently asleep except for a tremor that occasionally passed over her eyelids or her lips.

Laura was deeply moved both by pity and indignation. She felt that she must do something, yet the interference of a third party is proverbially worse than useless; but she held a power unknown to any one, and she would use it unflinchingly. She curbed the indignant words which rose to her lips; it would do Winnie no good to denounce her husband. How could Reginald be so cruel, so faithless? Was it that the first deliberate choice of evil so deteriorated his moral nature that he could no longer discern between right and wrong? She could not look back upon all the sorrow that had followed on his connection with her and hers, without a stirring of the pulses. She rose and walked to and fro. Winnie slowly opened her eyes, roused by the unusual motion.

Tell me,' said Laura, pausing opposite to her, 'what is Madame Moscynski's object in risking her character as she does? She does not give me the idea of a woman who would sacrifice much for any one.'

'I think she likes him well enough—he is very nice, you know—and she hates *me* more than she cares for him; but, above all, she likes his money. Little things have come to my notice, too many to tell now; but I am sure he pays for quantities of things for her. She has no money, and is boundlessly extravagant. I believe if Reginald was poor she would leave him alone.'

'Winnie, try and put this out of your head for a little while. We must endeavour to rescue Reginald, if possible; if we cannot, you

must, as you say, be patient and endure. Let us get away from Paris as soon as possible.'

Winifrid looked up with a dumb sort of surprise at the resolution and force which unconsciously expressed themselves in Laura's tone. 'The sooner the better; but I am afraid that Reginald has some scheme for returning to Austria. If he lets me go back to England without him at such a time, it will be a slight I shall not forgive.'

'He will not think of it,' said Laura, sitting down beside her on the sofa.

Winnie turned, and, laying her head on her shoulder, heaved a long, quivering sigh. 'Let me rest here, as I used to do when I had been in punishment at home, long ago, if I do not tire you. Yes, Laura, he undoubtedly *thinks* of it. But I trust he may be kept from leaving me, because—I cannot tell you how I dread it. It would be a kind of hopeless break. I scarcely know how it would affect me. Could the day ever come that I should not wish to *see* Reginald? to have him to myself? I am so young; life is so long!'

'Life will bring brighter days and happier anticipations,' returned Laura, with a quiet firmness of tone that gave momentary comfort to the sorrowing wife. 'There is really nothing to keep us in Paris. Come out for a drive with me to-day; it is dry, and there is no wind; you want all your strength and courage for Reginald's sake. Ask him this evening to fix the day of our departure, and make all preparations. When he finds that things are in readiness he will renounce his project of going to Austria or Hungary, if he ever seriously entertained it.'

'If,' repeated Winnie, and paused. 'At least,' she resumed, 'you will not forsake me, for you, you only are left me;' and she burst into a long but quiet fit of weeping, after which she seemed to rally something of the courage her cousin advised; and, promising to be ready in half an hour for the proposed drive, went to her own room to bathe her aching head.

Laura had never felt before so heavy a sense of responsibility as now weighed upon her. The destinies of these friends, for both of whom she felt the truest interest, for one the tenderest affection, seemed thrust into her hands.

Though not without a certain reliance on herself, she trembled at the idea of acting on her own unassisted judgment in so delicate and difficult a matter. Yet the only chance of salvation for either Winnie or Reginald lay in secrecy and rapid action.

Winnie must never know that her husband was a felon;

Reginald must never be degraded in any other save her own eyes. If only she could be sure that Holden had kept his counsel! that Reginald was safe from any detection except her own! The one counsellor for whom she longed unutterably was Denzil Crewe; and even were he beside her, she could not, must not, betray Reginald to him. But it was a comfort even to think there was one in whose judgment, in whose sound, healthy, instinctive common sense she could have such strong reliance. When would she have the unspeakable joy of having him near her again? to speak to, to be silent with, to listen to? near him perfect sympathy made spoken communication by no means essential. When would the dreary days of separation be ended? How sure she felt that no such cloud as darkened Winnie's life could ever come between Denzil and herself! Their affection had all the depth, fulness, and placidity which characterise a great river, the volume and force of which creates a smooth flowing current not to be broken or rippled save by the mightiest obstacles. Looking back to her brief engagement with Reginald, she contrasted the strange unrest and excitement of that disturbed interval, with the profound trust, the delicious tranquillity, of her present feelings, the delightful anticipation of real companionship and perfect understanding when at last Denzil and herself should share the same home and help each other in everyday cares and duties.

To enjoy this highest type of love needs a certain degree of maturity. Youth is still in too sunny a ferment to allow of this clear, calm strength; something of trial, something of experience, are requisites for the rich mellowness of a love that is but a deeper, fonder friendship, touched by imagination and warmed by an under-glow of passion.

'How would Denzil take her action in so important a crisis?' Laura continued to muse. Well, she was sure; at all events she must act on her own responsibility. He was too far away to be consulted, and all must be decided and arranged before his return.

Here she was broken in upon by Farrar, who announced that the carriage was at the door and her mistress ready.

The air and a change from her own rooms seemed to do Winifrid good, and Laura drew her into conversation on various subjects not connected with the absorbing topics of the present. She longed to tell her of her engagement—this was a matter that she knew would effectually draw Winnie out of herself—but she dared not. It would complicate everything and tend to alarm Reginald. He must not be frightened into recklessness. So she

talked of the Admiral and Mrs. Crewe, of their delightful visit to the seaside, of Dick's improving prospects, and Herbert's voyage. All went well till, turning into the Rue St. Honoré a few paces from the corner of their own street, Laura recognised Reginald entering the door of a small private hotel, which looked nevertheless very *recherché* and well kept.

'There is Reginald!' exclaimed Winifrid, her pale cheek flushing as she spoke. 'Do you know where he is going?'

'Where?' asked Laura, mechanically, though she guessed at once.

'He is going to call on Madame Moscynski,' returned Winifrid. 'That is her hotel.'

Laura did not know how to answer. 'Let us only get him away to England,' she said at last. 'Ask him to-night after dinner. I will slip away and you can coax him to fix the day. Believe me all will come right. Perhaps you may be mistaken. Are you sure Madame Moscynski really means to go with him? It seems too daring.' Winifrid only shook her head, for Laura's question brought them to the door of their hotel.

There was a bright fire and there were some costly flowers in the *salon*, which had evidently been put to rights in their absence, and Winifrid sat down at once in a low chair near the fire. 'It is very doubtful if Reginald will come in to dinner. If he does, I will do my best to persuade him to come with me, and fix next Wednesday or Thursday for our start. But, Laura, I see you think I judge Madame Moscynski too hardly. Perhaps, were I in your place, I should think the same; but you do not, you cannot, conceive what she is.'

'Bad enough, no doubt, yet——' And Laura paused, a sudden idea flashing upon her.

Winifrid rang the bell. 'Do you know if Monsieur dines here to-day?' she asked, when the waiter appeared.

'I do not, Madame. Monsieur was here about an hour ago, with the commissionnaire who brought these flowers, but he said nothing of dinner.'

'Very well! They are lovely flowers,' said Winnie, as the man left the room. 'It was nice of Reggie to send them. Perhaps he will come back to dinner,' she added wistfully.

Dinner-hour approached, however, and he did not appear; so Laura and Winifrid sat down to table without him, and had proceeded as far as dessert and coffee, when he came in, still in morning dress.

'Do not disturb yourselves,' he said pleasantly. 'I have only looked in to ask how Winnie is after her drive. But I have pro-

misled to dine with Wielizka and Latour, and one or two others, just to talk over our plans. We do not dine till eight. I think you seem the better of having gone out,' he continued, drawing a chair to the table, and looking at his wife.

'Yes, thank you; I *am* better. What charming flowers, Reggie! the room looked quite bright when we came in.'

Reginald smiled, and poured himself out some wine. 'Where did you go?' he asked languidly.

'Into the Bois. Do you know I feel so much stronger, that I am quite equal to start for England to-morrow! I wish, dear Reggie, you would fix the day to leave Paris.'

'You had better settle it yourself with Laura,' he returned indifferently.

'I confess I begin to be anxious to go back,' said Laura. 'You know I am not quite a free agent.' So saying, she rose and left the husband and wife together.

There was a minute's awkward silence; and then Reginald, rising, went to the fireplace, and, leaning against the mantelpiece, said, 'Well, then, when do you propose to start?'

'I leave all arrangements to you!' returned Winifrid, with a slight quiver in her voice.

'Of course I will do whatever you want in the way of preparation,' he rejoined, with careless good humour; 'but I cannot return to England for a month or two.'

'And you will let me return alone!' exclaimed Winnie with a burst of indignation, which shook her from head to foot, but which she mastered, while her husband answered, 'Don't romance! You will have your favourite, Laura, to keep you company; Laura, whom you prefer to my friends.' He spoke with cold composure, as if the glimpse he had caught of her emotion had roused some inimical feeling.

Winnie, conscious that every moment, every word was of importance, rose, and, coming to her husband's side, passed her arm through his caressingly. 'Reggie, dear,' she said, with a pathetic quiver in her voice, 'what is any company to me compared to yours? Do not let me go from you now! come with me! I fear I have been selfish in my great grief, but I will rouse myself to make your home pleasant and cheerful. Can I not be your companion, as I used to be? even though I am not a clever woman of the world.'

Reginald looked down into the sweet sad eyes so tenderly and imploringly raised to his, and his own softened as he put his arm round her and drew her close to him.

'That you certainly are not,' he said, not unkindly. 'But at least you must have learned that a man need not be the worse

husband because he is not always tied to his wife's apron string! I will not stay long—I will join you, in a month or six weeks, at Pierslynn. Why should you grudge me a little pleasure? You know how readily I gave up the shooting, and all the fun we intended to have, to go with you to Franzinsbad. If, indeed, you would care to come with us, I am sure Madame Moscynski——'

'Can you seriously propose such a thing?' interrupted Winifrid, drawing away from him in indignant amazement. 'Are you so blinded as not to see it is an insult?'

'Please yourself,' returned her husband, shrugging his shoulders. 'It is too bad to get so little out of life when—— but there'—interrupting himself—'do not be a fool, Winnie; you will do yourself no good by making scenes. I do not want to be harsh or unkind if you let me go my own way; only I do not choose to be held up as a fellow his wife can twist round her finger.'

'Are you influenced by so mean a motive?' exclaimed Winnie, yet struggling for self-control. 'Suppose *you* were weak and heart-broken, what would you think of *me* if I left you to amuse myself?'

'It is quite different,' he said impatiently. 'Besides, it is business as well as amusement that takes me to Wielizka's place. You know I have set my heart on making the Pierslynn stables renowned.'

'And I have set my heart on your returning with me, dear Reginald; you will not regret it once you are away from Paris. Ah! my husband, if you send me from you now, it will *never* be the same between us again!' and she caught his arm lovingly.

'Really, Winnie, this discussion has brought back your colour, and made you look nearly as handsome as ever. But do not waste your energies, my dear girl! I shall see you off on Wednesday or Thursday if you like, and start on my own journey the day after.'

'With Madame Moscynski?' asked Winnie in a low voice.

'Why not?' returned Reginald, sharply, 'if she happens to be travelling in the same direction?'

Winnie stood quite still and silent; her husband looked at his watch. 'By Jove!' he said, 'I shall be late for dinner;' and he walked out of the room without another word.

## CHAPTER XLVI.

LAURA waited the result of Winifrid's interview with her husband in no small anxiety, although she did not greatly fear it.

Reginald might be weak, vain, inconsiderate; but it was impossible he could be really cruel to so fair and sweet a wife as Winnie! one who loved him so truly, so tenderly. Perhaps



Winnie had somewhat exaggerated his misdoings and those of Madame Moscynski. Probably she was neither a good nor a prudent woman. She might have been a little spiteful and unkind towards Winifrid; but that a lady like herself, admitted into, nay, sought by what is termed 'good society,' could be absolutely vulgarly bad in the full acceptation of the word, appeared impossible to her ordinary common sense. Moreover, Madame Moscynski seemed neither young nor impulsive enough to make the tremendous sacrifice that an overt *liaison* with a married man implies. No! if Winnie only had the courage and patience to speak frankly and lovingly to her husband, all must come right.

But would she have it? she was so sore at heart, her stake in the game was so heavy—her all on a throw.

There was no use in thinking about it; thinking would do no good!

She stirred the fire and threw on another log of wood; then she drew the table nearer, and, taking out a letter received the day before from Mrs. Crewe, proceeded to answer it, hoping that, before she had finished, she would be able to name the date of her return. She was almost feverishly anxious to be back in London, to lay the train to the mine she longed, yet feared, to spring.

Her letter went on but slowly. She paused frequently to lean back in her chair, and to think over the plan she had carefully and painfully excogitated, and by which she hoped to avert scandal and detection from Reginald. Still Winifrid did not come; yet if their interview led to reconciliation and right understanding they would naturally take no heed of time. So Laura wrote on. It was more than an hour since she had left Reginald and his wife together, when the door opened to admit Winnie—Winnie looking unusually well, with colour in her cheeks, and new brightness in her eyes. She closed the door after her and drew a chair to the fire.

'How nice and comfortable you look!' she said quietly. 'To whom are you writing?'

'To Mrs. Crewe,' returned Laura, feeling uneasy at this beginning.

'Poor dear Mrs. Crewe! Tell her, Laura, we shall be in London on Tuesday or Wednesday at furthest.'

'I am truly glad to hear it,' cried Laura, turning her chair so as to face the speaker.

'Are you? Well, under any circumstances I am glad to leave Paris, but Reginald does *not* come with us. I have played my last card, Laura.'

'Do not say so. In such a game as yours there is no "last

yard!" exclaimed Laura eagerly. 'Do not fix any day. Wait; try again.'

'It is useless; if I delay, he will leave me here. No, I have quite resolved to start either in the morning or evening of Wednesday. Had Reginald *asked* me to stay, I should have stayed, but he did not. I want to get away to London, and then I shall be able to think quietly, and decide what to do. Ah! what can I do?' this with a burst of irrepressible despair, immediately checked. 'I suppose I shall find out in time. I shall grow stronger and wiser; and you, you will stay by me, dear!——' She stopped abruptly.

'Winifrid, dear Winnie, forgive me, but were you patient and tender?'

'I was, I think I was,' said Winifrid, and proceeded to repeat the conversation she had had with her husband, in a strange, quiet, mechanical way. 'Then he said he should be late for dinner, and walked out of the room without a look,' she concluded.

'But is this so very final?'

'I think it is,' returned Winnie, in the same quiet monotone. 'He was not cross or unkind in manner. He does not seem to think the matter worth exciting himself about; but he will not give up Madame Moscynski, and—I can do no more.'

'Let us see what to-morrow may bring forth,' said Laura, dismayed, yet not liking to let Winnie give up hope. 'As you parted without anger, at least open reproaches, I do not despair of the effect reflection may produce on Reginald.'

'Reflection! when he is with M. Wielizka and M. Latour; there is small room for reflection with such men. But there is no use in talking, and I want all my strength. Have you any book that would interest me? I do not want even to think, if I can help it.'

'I have not, dearest Winnie. I came away too hastily to think of putting one in my bag.'

'I wish it were not so wet and cold,' said Winnie, rising and putting aside the curtains to look out, 'or we might walk or drive somewhere. I feel as if I could do anything but sit still.'

'It is nearly ten o'clock,' said Laura, infinitely distressed, yet not wishing to admit the fact of Winifrid's despair, 'and you have had unusual fatigue to-day. Suppose you go to bed, and I will find something among the railway books downstairs to read aloud to you, that may send you to sleep.'

'Finish your letter,' replied Winifrid; 'tell Mrs. Crewe we shall leave Paris on Wednesday; and I will look for a book myself.' She went to the door; then, turning abruptly, came to Laura, threw her arms round her, and clasped her tightly.

‘How good and true you are to me! There is no one like you, no one.’

. . . . .

Laura read long, in a carefully monotonous tone, and at last had the satisfaction of seeing Winifrid’s dry strained eyes close in sleep. She sat yet awhile in deep thought beside her; and at length, after carefully arranging a night-light and placing the bell where the sleeper could touch it on waking, she stole softly from the room, and, calling Farrar, told her her mistress was asleep. But Laura’s mental work was not yet over; while she slowly undressed she revolved a scheme which needed all her courage.

She saw that it was hopeless to attack Reginald directly, but how would it do to speak to Madame Moscynski? She might not quite know all the serious mischief she was working. Even if heartless and unprincipled she might have some regard for her reputation, and, after hearing a calm friendly explanation of the true state of affairs, she might see the wisdom at least of declining Reginald’s escort.

It was a difficult and odious undertaking, but worth trying. She felt, rather than reasoned, that if the fascinating Princess withdrew from the intended expedition Reginald could be more successfully dealt with; but if he deserted his wife now, the breach would be hard to heal, while any estrangement between them would terribly aggravate the impending blow. Yes, she would risk the interview with Madame Moscynski. She might be laughed at for useless interference, she might fail; but, if she succeeded, that would repay all risks. Besides, Madame Moscynski was a woman of good standing; surely she would not peril her reputation in the teeth of a warning faithfully and temperately set before her under colour of supposing that she was not aware of the view taken by Reginald’s wife of the state of things.

Madame Moscynski was a formidable personage. It was no small undertaking to stand face to face with so consummate a woman of the world, and attack her with weapons from her own armoury, to use which required trained skill, and this Laura knew she did not possess; but would not the cut and thrust of a brave and honest purpose do as well? Come what might, she would try, and that before the next day was past its prime.

. . . . .

The following morning was crisp and clear after the rain of the previous night. Winnie was calm and silent—still, as if the fever of hope was past. How to manage a couple of hours for herself alone was Laura’s first difficulty.

‘Have you anything for me to do this morning?’ she asked her cousin.

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'No, dear, nothing. What do you wish yourself?'

'Well, I should not like to leave Paris without a peep at the Louvre.'

'No; of course you ought to see the pictures, but I do not care to go; Farrar says there are some things we ought to get before we quit Paris. I will take her out with me, and perhaps take a little drive in the Bois; it did me good yesterday.'

It was therefore arranged that Mrs. Piers should not wait luncheon for her cousin, and that Laura should linger as long as she liked in the galleries.

Laura never thought she could be among pictures and yet see so little of them as on that memorable morning; she thought over her intended visit and planned her opening speech. Once the subject was broached to Madame Moscynski her difficulties, at least of one description, would be over. Never was an hour and a half so long as that which distilled in leaden moments before she permitted herself to return to the hotel.

'Madame had just driven away,' the waiter said, 'and left word that she would probably not be back till late.'

'Was Monsieur in the house?'

'No; Monsieur was not long gone out.'

Suppose I find him with Madame Moscynski, what shall I do? thought Laura. 'I shall not come in now,' she said aloud to the observant waiter, 'I can breakfast on my return;' and with a steady purpose and throbbing heart she passed on to the unobtrusive hotel which Winnie had pointed out to her as the residence of her foe.

A courtly personage in accurate costume, with the air of an aristocratic butler, answered her inquiries.

'Yes, Madame la Princesse was at home.'

'And alone?'

'Alone? yes, quite alone.'

Laura sent up her card, and was immediately admitted to a small but most comfortably furnished room, sweet with the perfume of flowers which were tastefully and liberally distributed on mantelpiece and consoles.

Madame Moscynski herself stood in the middle of the room with Laura's card in her hand, and an expression of slightly amused surprise on her countenance. She had apparently just risen from a table strewn with letters and dainty costly appliances for writing.

Though quite aware of the unpleasantness of the task she had undertaken, its difficulties never seemed so formidable as now that she stood face to face with the little delicate-looking *spirituelle* woman who confronted her, in a picturesquely designed morning gown of dark green Indian cashmere, braided with gold, a scarf of

white Brussels lace draped with careful carelessness over her head, and a red camellia thrust effectively between its folds at one side.

'Miss Piers,' said the Princess, slowly, 'this is a surprise, a very agreeable surprise; pray sit down, and tell me to what I owe this pleasure.'

She drew forward a chair with a curious smile, partly polite, partly defiant, and took a seat herself at the opposite side of the fire with her back to the light.

'I have ventured to call upon you——' began Laura, feeling that she must collapse, and pass into the conventional nothing of an ordinary visit, under the tremendous ordeal of Madame Moscynski's peculiar searching eyes, and cool unflinching gaze, unless she mentally nailed her colours to the mast and opened fire directly.

'Pray do not talk about "venturing,"' said Madame Moscynski, blandly; 'is it my fault that we are not on pleasant terms of everyday intercourse? How is poor Mrs. Piers to-day? I was glad to find you persuaded her to go out.'

'I think the air and motion did her good.'

'No doubt; and you think of leaving Paris next week?'

'Even sooner, if—but it is of this I have come to speak to you, Madame Moscynski,' said Laura, gathering her forces; 'I feel it is a bold step, you may resent it; yet if I could clear away the—the sort of misunderstanding which seems to have sprung up between my cousin and yourself I think you would forgive me.'

'You are very good,' said the fair Pole, politely and guardedly; 'I am all attention.'

'Mrs. Piers wishes to leave Paris,' began Laura, her courage coming back gradually, 'but she does not like the idea of returning without her husband. It would convey the idea—of negligence, of—in short, separation, if after her sad bereavement he let her go home without him.'

'Ah!' said Madame Moscynski.

'She is under the impression,' said Laura, hurrying on with the succeeding sentences while the colour rose in her cheek, 'perhaps an incorrect one, that as *you* are returning to Vienna, or some other place in Austria, Reginald intends to travel with you, and it is of this I have come to speak. I do not think you can be aware how deeply Mrs. Piers would resent such a step. Justly or unjustly, it would seem to her the most open neglect and defiance; and if *this* is the wife's opinion, you may be sure the world will see with her eyes, and judge both Mr. Piers and yourself severely; at any rate the English world, which is still in a measure yours.'

'What do you wish me to do?' asked Madame Moscynski, coldly.

'Make Reginald understand that if he goes to Presburg he must go alone.'

'So I am a bugbear to my sweet young friend!' said Madame Moscynski, with an amused smile, which yet gave Laura a sudden sense of having made a false move. 'Really, Miss Piers, I must congratulate you on the pluck—that is the correct English term, is it not?—which emboldens you to come to a woman of my position, and say, "You are taking my cousin's husband from her and endangering your own reputation." You can know very little of the world.'

'I dare say,' returned Laura, with more decision than she had hitherto shown. 'But I know you are doing mischief of which perhaps you are not aware, and I give you the benefit of the doubt by telling you the truth, and trusting to your sense of right, to the womanliness of your nature, to put a stop to it.'

The Princess looked at her for an instant, and Laura met her eyes with a glance as unflinching.

'What do you think Mr. Piers will say when I give him a report of this flattering visit?'

'I cannot guess.'

'Do you think it will make him more pliant, more inclined to endure the—let us say *tristesse* of a wife perpetually drowned in tears?'

'If you choose to tell him, why, I have made matters worse, and I shall understand the part you intend to play.'

'You are wonderfully attached to Mrs. Piers, are you not? and yet whispers have reached me that she played a treacherous part towards you. I scarcely understand such Christian charity.'

'Mrs. Piers never was anything but true, and I would dare much to secure her peace and happiness.'

Madame Moscynski looked at the carpet for a while musingly, while a curious subtle smile stole round her mouth.

'You attribute more influence to me than I possess,' she said at length. 'I confess Mrs. Piers has roused *me*, and annoyed her husband, by her insolent and persistent rejection of my acquaintance. I have not been accustomed to such treatment; and, as Mr. Piers possesses to the full the masculine horror of being bored and opposed, she drives him to seek amusement in more congenial society. However, I am not implacable, and, as she has wisely chosen so good an envoy as yourself, I am willing to make terms.'

'I am no envoy,' cried Laura; 'I come here on my own responsibility—on my own unsuggested impulse.'

'Be that as it may,' resumed Madame Moscynski, coolly, 'I will tell you to what I can agree.'

'I had been hesitating between a visit to my uncle at Dairysford, or a *séjour* with some friends who have famous sporting quarters near Presburg, when Mr. Piers kindly offered to escort me to Hungary—far too agreeable a proposition to be declined—and as Mrs. Piers' absurd conduct made Dairysford a less desirable abode than it otherwise would be, I decided not to go there. If, however, I can be sure of her treating me with civility and allowing the current of our lives to run smoothly and pleasantly, why, I have no objection to the neighbourhood of Pierslynn for the winter, and I have no doubt I—we—can persuade Mr. Piers to burn his Yule log and eat his Christmas pudding in the halls of his ancestors.' She leant back in her chair as she finished speaking, playing with the ends of her lace scarf, surveying her visitor with calm, deliberate contempt.

The audacity of this speech roused the hottest indignation in her hearer. Laura felt her cheeks glow with shame and anger—shame that she should sit there and dispute with a hardened woman—dispute what? Winnie's right to the companionship of her own husband—anger that she should dare to propose such a compact. She had indeed made a mistake in attempting to win over such a woman, and she greatly feared that when Winifrid came to know of her visit she would be terribly vexed and mortified. But at least Madame Moscynski's conduct and avowal would give her the right to back up Winnie in her resistance to the intimacy which her husband sought to force upon her; there was nothing left but to end the interview, and she rose with a confused throng of angry, bitter thoughts crowding her brain.

'I have wasted your time and my own,' she said. 'You know I can promise nothing for Mrs. Piers; your own proposition—your own words—justify her conduct. If you are not inclined frankly and voluntarily to repair the mischief you certainly have done, nothing I can say will make you.'

She turned towards the door as she spoke. Madame Moscynski laughed a low pleasant laugh.

'But, my dear Miss Piers,' she said, 'is this not "much ado about nothing"—?'

The door opening interrupted her, and Reginald Piers came in unannounced, and in a leisurely, familiar way. At the sight of Laura he stood still, a look of the greatest surprise changing his usual indifferent expression to one more animated.

The Princess laughed again, this time with real merriment. 'Your *entrée* is quite dramatic, *mon ami*. You little thought that I was to have the honour of a visit from your cousin when you left

me this morning! Pray do not run away, Miss Piers, the moment the bone of contention appears. Let us have the murder out.'

Laura hesitated an instant and then stood her ground. 'Yes,' she said, 'Madame Moscynski, I am quite willing you should tell everything to Reginald before me.'

'What the deuce is it all about?' cried Reginald, the colour rising to his cheek. 'What has brought you here?'

'A very serious mission,' said Madame Moscynski, with quiet sarcasm. 'Miss Piers wishes to put us all right; she wishes to save you from the dangers and iniquity of a journey with so worthless a personage as myself. She wishes to enable your very charming wife to have her own way in rejecting the friendship of your friend, and yet to receive all the same devotion as though she yielded to your wishes; and as to myself, she wishes to see me penitent—converted from the error of my ways, and finally shut out from contact with such pure pearls as her cousin and herself.'

'By heaven, Laura!' cried Reginald, walking quickly across the room to the fireplace, where he took his stand upon the rug, 'you have made an awful fool of yourself! Pray, did Winifrid send you? or was it your own unassisted wisdom that planned this attack?'

'You are right, Reginald,' said Laura. 'I have indeed been foolish—foolish in disputing Winifrid's opinion—foolish in believing that such homely, narrow views as mine could influence so accomplished a woman of the world as—your friend.'

'I hope I deserve the epithet, dear Miss Piers,' said Madame Moscynski, blandly. 'At any rate, I do not believe that in the eyes of *my* world a journey anywhere with Mr. Piers will injure my reputation. It is good for so much.'

'And do not suppose that such ill-bred meddling will effect anything except to widen the breach you seek to heal!' cried Reginald. 'Nothing shall make me forego my intention to show the slight civility of accompanying a lady whom I sincerely regard on a long tedious journey, and you may tell my wife so.'

Madame Moscynski laughed a small triumphant laugh.

'Yes, Reginald,' said Laura, turning very pale, but facing him with steadfast eyes. 'There is something that may change your plans—your life. Before you outrage your wife's feelings and risk your own reputation, read some letters that were addressed to me from Australia by a man who knew you well, but is now no more; you will then perhaps admit my right to dictate your conduct in this matter.'

As she spoke, the light of anger died out of Reginald's face;



he made a step forward, and then stood absolutely still, a strange, dazed, startled look in his eyes. Laura kept the same position; and Madame Moscynski, raising herself from the attitude of repose which she had assumed, looked with no small curiosity from one to the other.

## CHAPTER XLVII.

REGINALD, after an instant of stunned silence, laughed aloud—a harsh, wild laugh.

‘Well done, Laura! when you uncart a bogie you are right to make it big and indefinite. What may these mysterious letters be, and from whom? Do they exist in a day-dream, or a nightmare?’

‘I will tell you all when we are alone,’ said Laura in a low voice, for she was frightened at her own words; and with a slight bow to Madame Moscynski, who sat upright, holding the arms of her chair, as if roused or excited, she left the room.

It was done, then! The irrevocable words, respecting which she had thought and planned so much, had burst from her without premeditation, almost involuntarily.

She walked on unconscious of the busy crowd around, the question perpetually beating as if with an iron hammer on her brain, ‘Have I done ill, or well, for Winifrid? Have I saved him—or driven him to recklessness? Have I in any way loosened or contracted the hold that woman has on him? When I see him again, how shall I bear to look on him in his shame and degradation? He who was so bright—so chivalrous once—my hero—my beloved!’

Laura was stirred to her innermost depths. But out of the truth and tenderness that lay at the root of her character she gathered the fruit of courage and resolution; she had begun, and she must finish. If—if only the shameful reality could be kept from Winnie, if she could be left the comfort of loving her husband! If, in the present stage, Reginald could be restored to her, she would and could forgive his passing infidelity; but such a stain as she (Laura) could reveal, would it not eat out the heart of love, and leave nothing but an outer discoloured husk?

How should she so guide the complication placed in her hands as to save all concerned!

For the moment she utterly lost sight of Madame Moscynski. She felt instinctively that her words had raised a white terror in Reginald’s heart that no witchery of woman could exercise. Pondering these things she walked on, mechanically avoiding

collision with those she encountered, but deaf and blind to the present.

She was aware she had reached the hotel; but, with a half-unconscious design to escape contact and conversation, she passed the door and paused at a crossing a little beyond it which led to a gate of the Tuileries Gardens. There was a throng of carriages, and she waited for an opportunity to traverse the street. At last she succeeded, and had descended the steps of the opposite terrace, still harassed by the agitated thoughts she could not bring into order or sequence, when a quick step gained upon her, and, looking up, she saw Reginald Piers beside her.

‘Laura! I insist on your explaining the extraordinary speech you have just made. Madame Moscynski thinks you a lunatic.’

He was deadly pale, and his eyes looked wild and eager.

‘My explanation involves a long story, Reginald, and one that can be told to you alone. Where can I find an opportunity?’

‘Here!’ said he, with fierce impatience. ‘We shall be safe from observation, and listeners, at the other side of the garden. Come; I am anxious to know what you allude to.’

They walked in silence to the terrace that overlooks the Seine, which is generally almost deserted. ‘Now,’ exclaimed Reginald, ‘we are effectually alone—speak!’

Laura slowly raised her eyes to his. ‘Reginald,’ she said, ‘I have known for some time that my grandfather was married. I have seen and copied the entry of his marriage in the register of St. Olave’s church. My father was born in wedlock. I am therefore the rightful owner of Pierslynn, and I am determined to assert my right.’

They had stopped beside the wall as if looking into the river beyond.

Reginald drew back a step. His lips opened, but no sound came from them; a wave of colour rushed to cheek and brow, and, clenching his hands on the light cane he carried, he exclaimed, ‘Great God! is this revenge?’

‘No,’ returned Laura, sadly; ‘it is justice.’

‘But how do you mean to prove that the entry in the register you have seen is that of your grandfather Geoffrey Piers’ marriage? The name is not so very uncommon,’ said Reginald, looking intently at her, and casting from him the fragments of his cane, which he had unconsciously snapped in two.

‘Because the fact of the marriage, with the place and date corresponding to the entry, is communicated to the woman in whose house Geoffrey Piers and his supposed mistress are known

to have lodged, and where my father was afterwards born, in a letter which is in my possession.'

'It is a forgery—a falsehood!' exclaimed Reginald, hastily—scornfully. 'No such document exists. How did it come into your hands?'

'I found it in the keeping of a man to whom I was directed by——' She paused, almost terrified at making the last avowal which would show Reginald that she knew all his treachery. 'A letter written just before his death by a man whom you knew—James Holden. He told me, what I would rather forfeit many fortunes than know, that you and he together visited the church, and examined the register—so—so—— Ah, heaven, Reginald! what tempted you?' She broke off, almost choked with sobs.

'Come on,' said Reginald, hoarsely: 'we shall be noticed standing here.' They walked a few paces in silence, then Reginald said, in tones that made every syllable a separate curse, 'The lying traitor! How can you believe a word such a fellow would write?'

'Reginald,' said Laura, in a low, earnest voice, 'it is useless to argue. I know my rights and I will maintain them. God knows how bitter it is to me to know all this, but——'

'It is all over with me,' interrupted Reginald, stopping suddenly and sitting down on a bench by which he paused. 'I am at your mercy.'

He leant his elbows on his knees, supporting his head on his hands, and gazing away into the blank disgraced future with a look of such gloom, such hopeless despair, that Laura's heart ached for him.

'You cannot believe that I will ever be merciless to Winnie or to you. Her lot is bound up with yours.'

'My God, Laura!' cried Reginald, turning to her, 'your obstinacy in refusing to marry me has ruined us both! You would have made me a most admirable wife; you would have kept me straight; you would not have worried my soul out with senseless jealousy. By heaven! I never intended to wrong you, Laura. I intended to give you Pierslynn and myself into the bargain, for you loved me in those days, only I was such a weak infernal idiot, that I could not hold my tongue, and I lost you.'

'Is it possible *you* can be such a traitor to the sweetest, fairest wife a man could have, as, for an instant, to wish me in her place? How can you be false to *her*, even in thought? How can you even temporarily prefer hackneyed wit and conventional elegance to her bright nature and fresh loveliness? No; I cannot express the pity and indignation I feel for you; your very senses seem blunted:

and I loved you so much once, Reggie, that I believe it costs *me* more to tell you this terrible history, than *you* to hear it.'

'You were always something different from other women, and I trust you, Laura; yet life is over for me. I wish to God I was out of it all, and lying at the bottom of the river there!' he said bitterly, as he rose, and went to lean over the parapet.

'I have never known an hour's real happiness from the day you broke with me; though I was wild with joy when I had really won Winnie. She is all you say—yet I always dreaded half unconsciously that you should find me out.'

There was silence for a few minutes. Laura felt her tears welling over as she noticed the crushed, cowed look that his whole face and figure had assumed.

At length he roused himself, and, turning round, exclaimed, 'If then, Laura, you are inclined to be friendly and forgiving, we may compromise matters; we might quietly share the property during our joint lives. I might relinquish a couple of thousand a year, and leave a declaration that would secure the inheritance to your children should you ever marry. We might live abroad a good deal and no one be any wiser.'

Laura shook her head. 'No, Reginald; you must leave the terms to *me*. I must have a far more equitable arrangement. But it is time we returned. I shall write out my plan and suggestions; in these you may help me. You must remember that I hold you and all you possess in my grasp; you have no alternative but to agree to what I propose, except so far as your legal knowledge may enable you to improve upon my ideas. Nothing can be done here. Return with us to London and try to soothe Winnie: she is your best friend—your best defence, and she loves you still—so much.'

He did not answer till they had walked a few paces. 'I *am* in your hands,' he said; 'but, tell me, are you absolutely certain you never let the smallest hint of this infernal affair ooze out?'

'Never!' exclaimed Laura; 'your honour is as dear to me as my own. I will save it yet.'

'My honour!' repeated Reginald, with unutterable bitterness. 'Look here, Laura; I owe Wielizka some money, and—and—the Princess too—not much—some bets at cards, you know.'

'I trust not a great deal; but, for heaven's sake, get clear of them before we start.'

'You must wait a day or two.'

'Settle that with your wife.'

Another pause. The grey mist of a November afternoon was rising softly among the dark-brown trunks and bare twigs of the

trees like a ghostly presence; a dull continuous roll from the streets pervaded the air, like an angry moan over the irrevocable past.

'I ought to thank you, Laura,' said Reginald as they approached the exit from the gardens—he spoke in a constrained voice—'I see you are generous; but the bitterness, the disgrace of the whole thing, rage at my short-sighted folly, poisons my soul. I am incapable of gratitude, of anything but a blind fury against myself—against everything—even you.'

Laura could not reply; how could she comfort him or reconcile him to himself? Yet her just anger was fading before the rising glow of pity for the criminal, little as she knew he deserved it.

'Let us try to wipe out the past,' she said at length. 'Of one thing be sure; I will guard you from suspicion; I think I can, but you must be guided by me.'

Reginald bent his head sullenly.

'I shall see you this evening,' he said. 'We must keep everything dark to Winnie—poor dear Winnie! but I will leave you now, Laura; I—I must be alone.'

He turned abruptly, and walked quickly away in the direction of the river.

Laura looked after him with a momentary uneasiness, but soon assured herself there was no need for anxiety. All Reginald's rage and regret was against his own failure and detection, not remorse for his robbery of herself.

Her chief sensation was relief that the dreaded avowal had been got through, and it had come about easily after all. Yet, had she not felt the pangs of shame more keenly than the offender? Did he indeed realise that she was determined to assert her rights? His rather audacious proposal to give her about a third of her own, and keep the affair to themselves, did not look like it.

These thoughts brought her to the door of their hotel. She felt faint and exhausted, and forced herself to swallow some food and wine; then, as Winifrid had not yet returned, she took refuge in her own room. Little more than two hours ago she had left the Louvre nervous with a degree of uncertainty as to the wisdom of the bold step she contemplated; and now the Rubicon was passed, and she was fairly launched on a wave of circumstance which might lead her—where?

But she felt calmer and stronger; things looked more promising for Winnie. She might be happy after all.

'Laura, dear, you are not feeling unwell?' said Winnie's kindly

voice at the door, after a space of quiet how long Laura did not know.

'Come in. I had a slight headache,' she returned, opening to her friend; 'a mere nothing.'

'A picture gallery is always fatiguing,' said Winifrid, walking to the fireplace and putting her foot on the fender. She was very pale; her heavy eyes, the sad curve of the sweet mouth, all bespoke hopeless depression.

'You are tired too, are you not?' asked Laura.

'Yes, a little,' with a sigh. 'We did a good deal of business, Farrar and myself; we got sundry little presents. I need not forget my friends even though I feel as if I had done with the world.'

'You have not done with the world yet, dear Winnie,' returned Laura, cheerfully. 'I trust there are brighter days in store for you.'

'You are looking brighter, at any rate, Laura,' said Winifrid, gazing at her more attentively. 'There is some sort of change in your face—dear old face that I know so well. Have you heard anything new?' this with a little eagerness.

'No, nothing whatever new. Let me see what you have been buying.'

As on the previous day Winnie and Laura sat down *tête-à-tête*, but they had scarce finished their soup when Reginald joined them.

'I did not intend to be so late,' he said, placing himself at table; 'or are you extra punctual?'

Winifrid was silent. Laura made some slight reply respecting the difference between watches, and dinner proceeded somewhat silently.

Reginald addressed himself principally to his wife; asked with languid but kindly interest where she had been; and, Laura could not help observing, avoided her eyes as much as possible, looking away even when he spoke to her.

When coffee had been served and the waiter departed, Reginald, whose composure and easy tone moved Laura to surprise and a certain degree of admiration, suddenly observed—playing with his spoon and looking rather steadily at the table-cloth—

'If you do not mind waiting till Thursday, Winifrid, I will go to London with you. I find the spring is a better time to visit the Zaradoski stables than the present season, and I dare say there is lots to do at Pierslynn.' He brought out this last word with an effort perceptible to Laura.

Winnie's eyes sparkled for a moment, but the light quickly faded as she replied: 'Of course, Reggie, I will wait any time you wish, so long as you fix it.'

'Very well, Thursday morning then; we can stay a few days in London and see my mother.'

'Certainly, that will be very nice; and Laura, dear, you must come on with us to Pierslynn,' cried Winifrid, who could hardly believe her ears; 'you do not know how charming Pierslynn is in winter. By the way'—for she had suffered too much to believe readily that her troubles were over—'is Lord Dereham to have a large party this year?' Laura understood this leading question.

'I believe not. I did hear he was to winter at Nice.' Another brief silence, then Reginald shivered visibly and pressed his hand to his head.

'I think I have taken cold,' he said; 'I am burning, yet chilled, and my head aches. I think I will go and lie down. Should any one call, I do not wish to be disturbed; and, Winnie, would you mind presently coming to bathe my brow with eau-de-cologne and water? you remember at Florence nothing did me so much good as your application of cold water and eau-de-cologne.'

'I will come in a few minutes, Reggie. I hope you are not suffering much.'

'I dare say I shall be all right to-morrow,' he returned as he left the room.

As the door shut, Winifrid changed her seat to one next Laura and laid her hand upon her cousin's. She was trembling all over.

'What can it mean, dearest Laura, this wonderful change? I dare not trust it.'

'It only means that Reginald has taken time to reflect, and his better self has conquered. I *would* have hope now, were I you. Go to him, Winnie, and soothe him as much as you can. I think he is unwell and suffering.'

Laura went slowly into the *salon*, and sat down by the fire, intending to wait a while in case Winnie returned, or sent for her, planning in her own mind, the while, how she should frame the scheme she had promised to write out for Reginald. Presently, the waiter came in with the letters just arrived by the evening post.

Several for Reginald; one for Winnie, with a French stamp; and one addressed in Mrs. Crewe's writing to herself, containing an excellent report of the Admiral, and brimming over with

curiosity as to the details of the illness of the poor dear baby, who had been, Mrs. Crewe was always convinced, very much mis-managed. The letter concluded with some small details touching Topsy and Collins which brought the quiet cosy home in Leamington Road vividly before Laura, and she sat lost in thought contrasting the moral cyclone which had suddenly wrapped her in its wild eddies with the simple tranquillity of her past life—of the serene future, to which she looked with such sweet certainty; while, though keenly alive to the tragedy which Reginald had brought upon himself, she could not help smiling as imagination pictured the excitement, the curiosity, the exultation of Mrs. Crewe when the time came for the great revelation.

Here Winnie broke in upon her reflections. 'Reginald wants to know if there are any letters for him,' she said.

'There are several,' said Laura, pointing to them; 'the post has been in some time.'

'I know most of these,' said Winnie, looking over them. 'There is one from his lawyer, and from Lord Dereham; and this is a circular, and this is from the steward at Pierslynn.' She sighed as she said the name.

'Are you very fond of Pierslynn?' asked Laura, looking at her with a strange yearning pity.

'No, not particularly. At first I thought I was going to love the place, but I suffered so much there, it is so associated with those first agonising doubts. But who can this be from? It is a foreign-looking hand.'

She opened the letter addressed to herself, and looked at the contents, her countenance changing as she did so. 'This is very extraordinary,' she said. 'Listen to this, Laura: "Madam, I think it right to inform you that your husband prefers to remain in Paris because he is in the toils of a fascinating woman, well known in certain circles both here and in London, who resides not far from you; she intends to take him with her on a distant journey. I warn you that once away from such influence as home still exercises over him, the lady in question, and the staff of bloodsuckers connected with her by various ties, will never leave their hold till they have reduced your husband, and through him yourself, to beggary and worse. Madame—— has but one object—to get and to spend money; and, as she cannot work altogether without help, she is obliged to share with the infernal crew to whom she is linked. You have hitherto resisted bravely the attempts made to draw you into the net. Make a strong effort now to rescue your infatuated husband, who is every day getting more and more involved in the meshes of a woman who never yet cared to have a poor lover. Do



not quit Paris without him. All is arranged for the departure of Madame—— and her victim on the 2nd, and, once gone, he will never return to you. Your sincere sympathiser, —— ———'

The cousins looked at each other in silence for a moment. Winnie was the first to speak.

'In one sense it is a false alarm,' she said. 'For some reason or other Reginald is determined to come with us on Thursday. Whether the Princess has made any new arrangement, I cannot tell, but there is a change for the better in Reggie's heart, and he is very unwell.'

'Then you will take no notice of this? Anonymous productions seldom deserve any.'

'I do not know,' returned Winifrid, thoughtfully; 'I believe every word in this letter is true as far as that dreadful woman is concerned, and Reggie too,' she added with a sigh. 'Not that he deliberately intended to leave me for ever; and, you see, he is really true at heart—at least I begin to hope so. I wish he could see the letter, it might be a warning. I think I will show it to him, and say, "I know it is false, because you are not going to leave me."''

It was late that night before Laura attempted to sleep. She wrote steadily for a considerable time, occasionally pausing to think, but making few corrections. At length she folded up and sealed a thick letter addressed to Reginald Piers, which she shut into her writing-case, and then crept quietly to bed.

*(To be concluded.)*

# BELGRAVIA.

MAY 1883.

## Maid of Athens.

BY JUSTIN MCCARTHY, M.P. .

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### I RESOLVE TO BE A HERO.

WHEN I found myself again in the drenching streets, my first impulse was to get to some lonely place quite out of the city, where I might think over the whole situation in quiet. Like most other people, I suppose, when anything troubles me, I am best soothed by rapidity of motion. If I could have got on a horse now, of some splendid English or Arab breed, and galloped for a few miles as fast as he could carry me, that would be a relief—that would be living. But there are no animals in Athens that could properly be called horses in that sense, and a jogging ride on a mule dispels not sickness of the heart, shakes not off that grim companion, black care, that sits behind the horseman. So I walked as fast as the driving rain and wind would allow me, and hardly knew where I was walking, except that I was getting clear of the streets anyhow. At last I found myself on the side of the Hill of the Muses, and suddenly confronted in the mist by the monument to Philopappus.

The Hill of the Muses is one of many hills or hillocks scattered over the plain on which Athens stands, and which itself is cinctured by ranges of greater and more distant mountains. The Acropolis, the Hill of Mars, the Hill of the Muses, the hill on which the observatory is built; these and other such eminences look from a distance almost like billows on the sea. To-day all distant objects are blotted out in mist and rain. I could not see the nearest of the neighbour hills, as I stood and soaked beneath the monument to Philopappus. It is a strange and ugly erection this monument to Philopappus. Seen from the plain it bears an odd resemblance to the figure of some Egyptian divinity seated,

and bending forward, but when one is near to it he finds no beauty or mystery or illusion in it. I had never stopped to ask myself or anyone else who Philopappus was, and why he had obtained a huge monument on that commanding height; I had never tried to read the remains of the Latin inscription that are on it. To-day my only interest in the unlovely erection was that I suddenly found myself just beneath its crumbling, weather-worn marbles, and I felt a certain satisfaction in knowing that I had got to something definite. Here then I called a halt, and set myself in the rain to the task of thinking what I was to do next.

At that moment I was convinced that all was over between Athena and me, over and for ever. In my present mood I don't think I should have desired to be her accepted lover. I was too angry with her to see any quality of nobleness in the sacrifice she was determined to make. I did not blame myself, as I ought to have done, for not having gone straightway to her when I first came to Athens this time and told her that I had come for her, and for the renewal of our love. I felt indeed that Mrs. Rosaire had outwitted me; that at my first meeting with her she had so instilled into my heart the idea of a changed Athena as to make me of my own accord shrink back and become reserved and watchful in my manner, and thus engender misunderstanding at the very outset. All this was exactly what Mrs. Rosaire especially wanted to do, and she had done it cleverly. That was clear enough, but even still I did not believe that anything else would have happened if I had gone frankly to Athena at once. No; she may think so now, she may try to persuade herself of it as she tries to persuade me, but it is not so. Her soul is set on ambition and not on love; not a selfish ambition truly, that I could not but see. She has given herself over to a romantic purpose; she has set her soul on it. What chance should I have of prevailing against such a passion?

One thing I could do and would do: I could be with her in her cause. My heart was torn with admiration for her, compassion for her, anger against her, and outlasting and, absorbing every mere burst of separate emotion, the one burning love for her which seemed now to leave me with no purpose in existence but that of seeking the best way of getting out of existence in such a manner as to make her think of me and say I had done well. Every word Athena had spoken with the object of inducing me to return to England had only more and more wrought me into a resolve to stay in Greece. The more earnestly she pressed me to keep out of any political entanglement in Greece, the more determined I became that Greece should find a new soldier in me.

While I was forming this determination the name of Constantine Margarites seemed to come up with it in my mind. He was the man who could put me in the way, if he would, of offering my services to the cause of Greek conspiracy. He could hardly have any objection—at least, he could hardly have any objection founded on any particular concern for my personal safety; and I thought I should be able to show him that I could make myself useful. There was nothing better to do than to go to him at once. It was very likely that at first he would endeavour to evade telling me anything. There seemed something in his nature which made him take a positive pleasure in mystifying people, and in trying to throw secrecy over the simplest and most innocent matter. But if I began by letting him see that I knew something, he would be sure to end by dealing openly with me.

I lost no time in carrying out my resolve. I left Philopappus and came down from my misty hill; I went back to the hotel. I could not present myself drenched and dripping as I was in Margarites' elegant presence. I hastened nevertheless to get ready for the visit, so that I should not lose the chance given by the rain. Margarites would never venture out in a rain-storm if he could possibly remain within doors. Should the weather suddenly get fine, there would be no having him. I had never been to Margarites' house as yet. Rich as he was and fond of spending money, he did not seem to entertain people at his house, as an Englishman would do. Everyone said he had a superb house, but he appeared to keep it all to himself.

His house was in one of the finest streets of Athens, and it was perhaps the finest house in that quarter. It was enclosed by white walls, and was entered by a great gateway of bronze, the very work on which would have been a gladness to all South Kensington. In the courtyard was a fountain of granite and malachite with tinted and perfumed water, looking, in the drenching rain, as is the way of fountains, dim, depressed, 'over crowded,' and ashamed of itself. Servants in rich Albanian costumes were lounging in the hall, and there was a display of glittering arms which might have suited the sentinels of a prince. A great flight of marble steps led up to the hall door of the house, and I was passed with ceremony fit for a palace from servant to servant until at last I reached Constantine's own man, a Greek who spoke French and English as well as Constantine himself. I had hardly time to get out my name when the polite personage told me that he was sure his master would see me at once. He had, it seems, but just risen. I was marshalled through darkened ante-chambers with heavy silken curtains and much ornament of all kinds, until at

length a final curtain was lifted and I found myself in the presence of the master of the house.

‘My dear Cleveland, my very dear friend! so kind of you to come to see me in my poor dwelling. I would have gone to you and saved you the pain of coming, had I known in time; but now I am glad I did not, for I am pleased to see you here, and I have one or two things I should like to show you. I know you take an interest in medals and coins and china and curiosities; all cultured Englishmen do now, and I have some things to show you that I think you will like. You smoke, of course—cigarette or a cigar? Here we all prefer the cigarette, but if you like a cigar better try one of these. I don’t think you will find them amiss: they are the same as the Paris Rothschilds get. You have not breakfasted, I hope? I have not. Let me ring the bell.’

I explained that I had breakfasted, and when I had made distinct assurance on that point he then explained that in point of fact he had breakfasted also. So that matter was settled. Then we set to smoking, and he was for showing me some of his accumulated curiosities; the room was crammed with pictures, ornaments, and gorgeously mounted weapons of all kinds. But I told him directly that I had come on a matter of business.

‘Business? you dear practical Englishmen! But what can my dear Cleveland have to do with his friend Margarites in the matter of business? Anyhow, if it is anything I can do, you may set it down as done already, dear Cleveland.’

‘Well, look here, Margarites, it’s this. Shall I come to the point at once and speak right out?’

‘To the very point, my dear fellow, and speak as right out as ever you like.’ He looked a little surprised, but he was not a man to show much amazement at anything.

‘I know there is something going on about an expedition to the Turkish frontier.’

‘Ah, you know that? you already know that, my dear Cleveland?’

Margarites was sitting on a low luxurious chair, and was curling the ends of his long moustache with the manner of one for whom life has no serious concern of any kind. He repeated blandly, ‘You already know that, my dear Cleveland?’ but no hint could be extracted from his words or his manner to add to my stock of knowledge, nor did he show the least curiosity as to the means by which I had got at my information.

‘Yes, I know you have some plan or project for forcing the hand of the Government by an expedition to cross the Turkish frontier.’





“Do listen to me, Margarites.”







'You say "you" have some plan, my dear Cleveland—now, may I ask whether by "you" I am to understand that you mean the persons who have this supposed project in hand, or simply my humble self, Constantine Margarites?'

'Well, I know that you are in it.'

'Happily for me, I don't want my share in anything kept a secret, dear Cleveland. Athens is the very worst place in all the world for a secret. I do believe I should recommend any one who had a project of any kind on hand, were it only a tramway company or a matrimonial speculation, to advertise it at once in the 'Aion' newspaper—or he might stroll of an evening on the Square of the Constitution when the band is playing, and tell his purpose to every one who sits in front of the surrounding cafés. Either plan would save him trouble. But I don't object to your knowing anything, my dear friend; pray don't suppose for a moment that I feel the slightest objection.'

'I shan't betray you to the Government at Constantinople; you may rely on that.'

'No; I have no fear on that score; although most of you Englishmen are such patrons of the Turk that it seems to me they would sell their own brother to please him. I never could quite understand your English policy, Cleveland; I am so dull; brought up among simple islanders, you know. I wish you would kindly explain it all to me. You English can be so very clear, when you like.'

'Some other time, Margarites, I shall be delighted to explain as far as I can; and that won't be far, I fancy, for I am not much of a politician. But just now I want to talk to you about this expedition of yours; about that and nothing else.'

'Is he peremptory, the dear Cleveland?' Margarites said with a languorous smile. 'Puts a pistol to the head of his innocent friend, and says you must tell all or die. Well, Cleveland, what do you want to know?—I am not anxious to die.'

'I don't want to know anything——'

'He doesn't want to know anything, *ce cher* Cleveland; so considerate; how forbearing! Shall we then dismiss the subject, and I will show you some curiosities worth looking at?'

'Do listen to me, Margarites——'

'As if I had been doing anything else but listening to him! Are they impetuous, these Britons—and we usually think them so steady and sober.'

'I don't want to know anything about your plans just now, Margarites.'

'Ah, just now! Observe the qualification! *Not just now;*

but some other time. Very well, my dear Cleveland; some other time let it be, and long way off, if you are so kind. And now shall we not look at my curiosities?’

‘Listen, Margarites; I know very well you are much more in earnest about most things than you pretend to be. I only want to ask you this now: will you let me join you? Do anything you like with me; put me where you will; tell me all or tell me nothing; only give me a chance of acting with you, and see if I fail you when the time comes to act.’

Margarites raised his eyebrows in genuine surprise.

‘Do you really mean this, Cleveland? Do you wish to be with us? You?’

‘I wish it with all my heart and soul.’

‘But tell me; why is this? You always seemed to make light of the aspirations and the rights of Hellenes; how have you changed so suddenly?’

‘One must not judge men by their manner, Margarites. You yourself might seem to some people to make light of most things.’

‘True, true, philosophic Cleveland.’ He seemed to me to be talking only for the purpose of saying something, while secretly he was looking at the question from various perplexing points of view. He was lying back in his arm-chair and moving his head from side to side, and meanwhile caressingly spanning with his fingers the ankle of his right foot, which he had thrown across his left knee. Every now and then he glanced at me; evidently he had not quite made up his mind whether to encourage or discourage my proposal.

‘Quite sure you are serious in this, my dear Cleveland? You haven’t thought it all out, perhaps? I don’t think you would like us and our ways; and then, why should Captain Pen turn himself into Captain Sword? No, no; better remain as you are, good Captain Pen; and describe us and our deeds in *Our Own Correspondent’s* happy style—graphic style—graphic! isn’t that the word—that will be better.’

‘I handled the sword long before I handled the pen, Margarites.’

‘Yes, yes; but then you soon gave it up; you turned the sword into steel pens—very good weapons too. I was at the play in London not so long ago; it was a play by your great author who wrote a book on Athens—Lord Bulwer Lytton; Sir Bulwer Lytton, what was he? and in the play some one said the pen is mightier than the sword. Let that be your motto, Cleveland; keep to the pen; you can do good work with that.’

Nothing was ever to be done with Margarites except by announcing your determination in the bluntest way.

‘Look here, Margarites, it will save you some time and some waste of words if I tell you at once that I didn’t come here to ask advice. My mind is entirely made up. I came to you because I thought you were the man who could most easily put me in the way of doing what I want to do. If you don’t like to do this you have only to say so; I shan’t find any fault with you. I know a dozen others who, I dare say, can do all I want.’

‘What dear decisive fellows you Britons are! You go at a decision as you go at your five-bar gates; you over; you break your neck; all one to you; only the thing has to be done at once; we are so different, we lazy Greeks; we like to think a thing over, turn it up in all the lights; see how it shows on this side, on that side; go round and ask all our friends for advice; consult the omens; I always envy our ancestors; I mean *my* ancestors, the Greeks, Cleveland; not your great Britons.’

His ancestors the Greeks! His ancestors the mongrel Levantines he means; or the hungry Greeklings of Juvenal.

‘I always envy them when they set about consulting the omens and auguries.’

‘Still, Margarites, although your ancestors the Greeks were very generous fellows no doubt, they usually consulted the omens about some decision of their own; they did not consider it necessary to take quite so much trouble about the decisions of their neighbours.’

He smiled. ‘True; that is very true. Then you are determined to go with us, all the way? Remember, there is danger; great danger. Oh, do not be angry, I don’t suppose you Britons are likely to be made afraid, and I have seen you under fire already.’ He said this with an exasperating smile, I suppose at the oddity of the circumstances under which he had seen me under fire. ‘But an Englishman may not care to throw his life away for the sake of a Greek cause.’

‘My life isn’t of any particular value to myself or any one else, Margarites; and I can’t do anything better with it than to risk it for some good cause. Anyhow, that’s settled.’

‘Your mind is made up?’

‘My mind is made up.’

His mind, thereupon, seemed suddenly to be made up too. His dark eyes flashed with apparent delight. He clasped my hand fervidly in his, and pressed it to his heart. Then he began a mad waltz round and round his room, as if in the sheer frenzy of exuberant spirits.

‘I wish I were an Englishman that I might cry huzza!’ he exclaimed. ‘This is good news, Cleveland. Now we are indeed

brothers. I welcome you ; I enrol you ; I congratulate Greece with all my heart on her new soldier. Oh, you shall be in posts of danger, believe me. We take you at your word. You shall have a task worthy of your courage. Welcome, Cleveland, my brother in arms !'

He clasped my hand again. His enthusiasm puzzled me. Is it possible that I had altogether mistaken this man ? Is he then an unselfish patriotic lyrical enthusiast under a mask of levity and cynicism ? I always made up my mind that Margarites disliked me, as I confess I always disliked him. Is it possible that his sudden friendship for me is real ? Is it not possible that after all he may have disliked me only because he thought me wanting in sympathy with what he holds to be the Greek national cause ?

'Tell me one thing, my dear friend,' he said, suddenly coming to a halt. 'Does anybody know of your resolve to offer yourself to Greece ?'

'Nobody but you.'

His eyes brightened anew.

'I am the first you came to ?'

'The first and the only.'

'I am so proud of my recruit ! I shall present you in triumph to some of our friends who hitherto could not believe it possible. Yet again ; one thing more. Has *she* given her consent to this ?'

'She ?'

'Yes, she ; you know ; the divine Maid of Athens. Has she given her permission ?'

'I haven't asked her ; she knows nothing of it. I told you, Margarites, that you were the only person whom I had spoken to about this.'

'True, yes, to be sure ; but then the Maid of Athens does not count among ordinary persons. Well, she will blame me for this ; she will be angry, she will tell me I have acted against her own very orders, but I cannot help that, Cleveland ; I must disobey for once ?'

'Disobey what ? What orders ?'

'Oh, well, you know she was anxious about you, and she did not want you to know anything of what was going on. Not that she feared you would disclose ; no, no—no thought of that, but she did not believe you cared about Greece, and she did not wish you to be perhaps entangled in projects to which you could not give your whole heart, as she has done, and as I have done.'

I am sure my face must have grown red as I heard him thus couple his name and hers. I could hardly endure it. My new brother in arms seemed to me a hateful personage at that moment.

I wish we had been together in front of a Turkish force, and he should soon have a chance of showing whether he was ready to risk more for Greece than I. For Greece? for Greece? ah, no; it was not for Greece I thought to risk my life, nor even for Athena, but for myself, that I might show bravely in that girl's eyes and teach her that I was a better man than she thought me. Something of this came out in my words.

'Well, Margarites, you must give me a chance, and I will show you whether my heart is in this cause or not.'

'You shall have the chance,' he said fervently; 'I swear that to you, Cleveland, my gallant Englishman. You are my recruit; it is my duty to see that you have a place of honour and of danger.' There was a gleam in his eyes like that which I have seen flash from the eyes of a panther brought to bay in some dark retreat. My brother in arms has depths of passion of some kind in him, that is clear. In such a mood I should think he would fight the Turks as fiercely as another Kanaris. I wish I could like my brother-in-arms more thoroughly than I seem to do.

'You must come with me to-night,' Margarites said, 'to the Café Solon; we will meet some fellows there to whom this will be good news, as it is to me. Nothing can be done just for the hour, until the spring is coming and the mountain passes can be crossed; but there is work enough of preparation for the meanwhile. You go to Madame Rosaire's this evening? No? Well, you will meet me at the Café Solon at ten. Yes? Till then adieu, adieu.'

Yes, I had made up my mind. This Greek business, whatever its chances, is at least the bold effort of a few brave Greeks who hold their country more dear than their lives; and a man could not risk his life more honourably. Looking at the whole matter coolly, I don't see how I could possibly do anything better with my life than to throw it away in an expedition across the Turkish frontier for the sake of Greece. I have no kith or kin who are likely to cry their eyes out after me, happen what will. My uncle will go into mourning, his young wife will have other things to think about more important than anything concerning me. The lines which Pope puts into the mouth of Sarpedon in the Iliad came into my memory,

Yet let me die by Ilion's sacred wall;  
Troy in whose cause I fell will mourn my fall.

Perhaps Greece, if I should be destined to fall in her cause, will mourn my fall. Anyhow, Athena Rosaire will think better of me, will give me a place always in her memory; perhaps as time lapses

she will come to think of me as one of the soldiers of the cause to which she had devoted her youth, and will believe that I went out to do her bidding.

I began to think I saw my way clear before me. The clouds were scattering, doubt was vanishing. I felt heroic and romantic. I was already mentally discounting my death in the cause of Greece, and awarding to myself in anticipation the honours of a soldier's funeral and an enduring place in Athena Rosaire's memory. As I turned into the Square of the Constitution I found myself humming the Marseillaise—why I could not have told, except that it spoke of sacrifice and of patriotic devotion and of death, and so suited the mood in which I found myself, and the hopes which lifted me above the common earth and made me fancy myself a hero.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### ABOUT MARGARITES.

'No,' Mr. Vlachos said, shaking his head gravely, 'he is not a man whom I should trust, certainly not.'

We were sitting together, we two alone, in the smoking-room of the hotel the evening of the day when I had seen Margarites, and we were talking of that youth. I was about to set out for the Café Solon to meet Margarites, but I had not thought proper to mention that fact to Vlachos. I had merely drawn him into talk about Margarites, and luckily for me he was in a talkative mood.

'You don't think he would betray a political cause, surely?'

'You go a little too fast,' the old Greek said with a smile. 'What political cause? Which political cause?'

'Do you think he is a man to betray any political cause?'

'*Distinguo*. If you ask me is he a man to betray any Greek cause to which he has committed himself, I should say no, certainly not; he is far too wise and politic and ambitious for that. Margarites has set his heart on playing the part of a Greek patriot and becoming popular in Greece. I dare say he hopes to be prime minister one day; and why should he not? Tricoupis and Comoundouros can't live for ever, and for all I can see the office will be going a-begging when they are gone; and in any case Margarites is a very clever capable sort of fellow, and he has too much money to be dishonest in the ordinary way. His chances are very good.'

Mr. Vlachos was always disposed to be a little contradictory in his way of dealing with questions. He would seldom admit that one was quite right in anything. Even where you were absolutely

of the same opinion as himself, he would be sure to take exception to something in your way of stating your case, or he would seize the opportunity of showing that although your conclusions were correct, yet your knowledge of the matter was imperfect and required to be supplemented from his much larger stores. One soon came to make allowance for this intellectual peculiarity, and to discount it in advance. It was a good plan to make some slight preparation for Vlachos, when one came to ask his advice on any subject. If you stated exactly what you proposed to do, the chances were many to one that even were that the very course which he himself would have felt inclined to recommend he would shake his head at it and endeavour to reason you out of it. It was therefore well to go a little beyond the mark, to supplement your genuine intentions by adding some ideas which really made no part of your scheme ; there was a reasonable chance that the spirit of contradiction would satisfy itself upon these, and that the essential part of your proposal would have the full benefit of his really keen and clear judgment in its condition of absolute impartiality.

In the present instance, however, I was not looking for advice to govern my own course of conduct. The seven wise masters of Greece could not have talked me out of my determination. I was only curious to know, if I could learn it, whether Margarites was politically sincere or not, without having to wait for the testimony of events.

‘Then he is to be trusted?’

‘Again I say I distinguish. He will not do anything to make him unpopular with Greeks, that you may be sure of, and in that way he is to be trusted politically. But I should not like to be too confident as to his dealings with individuals. I should think if he were King David and I were Uriah, I should begin to be a little suspicious when he ordered me to the front.’

‘Ah, well, that question will hardly arise, I should think.’

‘No, not to either of us, doubtless. You and I, we have no Bathshebas. But I should be careful how I dealt with Margarites, especially if I were a foreigner. You wouldn’t have had your arm like that only for him.’

‘Come, now, how could that be?’

‘It is so ; Pollen told me so. Pollen was ready enough to listen to reason, but Margarites kept telling him people would say he was afraid.’

‘What possible motive could Margarites have had?’

‘The spirit of mischief, I suppose. Some men are full of it ; Levantines I think most of all.’



Mr. Vlachos gave me an outline sketch of the history of Margarites so far as he was acquainted with it. It is only fair to say that in any description given by Vlachos of persons with whom he was not altogether in sympathy, there was always some allowance to be made for a certain inclination to satire or cynicism. Anyhow, his account of the Margarites family was to the effect that the grandfather of my friend had been a renegade Greek, a phanariote, as the Greeks were called who held office under the Porte in Constantinople—the local meaning of the phrase has long since passed away—a sort of Anastasius unrepentant, who made all the money and acquired all the property he could; that this worthy personage having made his calculations vary shrewdly, came round to the cause of Greece just at the right time, and became a favourite with the protecting powers; that his property, apart from his funded possessions, was chiefly in islands secured to the new kingdom of Greece; that his son, the father of my friend, increased the property real and personal by clever financial, agricultural, and political dealings; that Margarites the present had been educated in all the crafts of Western Europe. It amused me not a little to hear Vlachos, a Greek, speak of the crafts of Western Europe. We of Western Europe are in the habit of talking of the crafts of the Greeks as the final education of a youth who means to make his way in the world. Vlachos managed to convey to me the idea, without making a statement in so many words, that Constantine Margarites had led a somewhat stormy youth in London, Paris, and Vienna, and that he was now an ambitious man eager to do something in politics and make a figure in the world. Time had transfigured the fame of his grandfather into that of a patriot who had thrown his whole soul and fortune into the cause of his country, and that of his father into the more sober but not less worthy renown of one who had devoted his life to the development of the various resources of the kingdom of Greece. It remained for the heir of these noble ancestors, for Constantine Margarites, so Vlachos put it, to win popularity as one who gave himself up to the task of obtaining for Greece that legitimate and natural frontier which corresponded with her national aspirations. When quite a boy he had borne arms in one of the later efforts of Crete to shake herself free from the dominion of the Ottoman. He had spent any quantity of money to that end, Vlachos owned. His father had recently died, and he had only his mother to control him, and she was ready to agree to anything he liked. Later on he had again served as a volunteer in the ranks of Cretan insurgents, and had fitted out an expedition of his own to help the cause of Crete. When the war broke out between Russia and

Turkey, Margarites had been energetic in trying to force the Greek Government into an attempt on the provinces which Greece claimed, and was again busy at the work of preparing expeditions. Everybody knows that after the treaty of Berlin, Turkey tried to evade her obligations, and then Margarites came to the front anew. He was now one of the secret leaders of the party who were impatient to force the hand of the government, and to try the chance of an expedition to cross the Turkish frontier and occupy some of the disputed provinces with an armed force.

There was not much in all this to the discredit of Margarites. This I felt compelled to admit to myself. I even challenged Vlachos to explain his doubts as to the genuine character of Margarites' patriotism, and I found that he could tell me of nothing but vague dislike such as I felt myself. He said that Margarites always seemed to him to be a trickster and a play-actor; that he was working for himself and not for Greece; that he had great sums of money stored up in Western securities, so that, come what might, he could always have a satisfactory asylum secured to him in London or Paris. Margarites, according to Vlachos, was accustomed to have his way in everything, and indulge and amuse himself as he thought fit; and it was his ambition now to be a great man in Greece, or a rich Greek refugee out of Greece.

'I don't want to say anything too harsh of the young man,' so Vlachos concluded; 'he is a born comedian, a comedian of nature, he is always playing a part, that is all.'

Still there was not much in that. That was only one man's judgment of another man. More than that, it was the judgment pronounced by an old and disappointed man upon a young man who thus far was playing a successful game. Still more, it was the judgment pronounced by a Greek of old family and standing upon a man of doubtful antecedents and ancestors. I shared much of my friend's personal dislike to Margarites, but I could not found any serious distrust of the man upon evidence like that.

Anyhow, it was all the same to me now. If any great game was to be played, it should not be played without me. If Athena had set her heart upon a stroke for the legitimate aspirations of Greece, as we loved to call them, I would not stand out and see others risk their lives. I have no love for conspiracies. I do not even much admire the cosmopolitan patriot; I am rather inclined to think that each of us, however clever, energetic, and self-sacrificing, can find enough to do at home in his own country. But one cannot live on maxims and ideas. 'If a man,' says Byron, 'has no freedom to fight for at home, let him combat for that of

his neighbours.' The lines, to be sure, were written in one of Byron's cynical moods, and they go on to advise the man to 'think of the glories of Greece and of Rome, and get knocked on the head for his labours.' One who goes into the business of war at all must run the risk sometimes of getting knocked on the head for some cause about the rights and wrongs of which he is not a whit more assured than he is about the merits of any cause in which his neighbours are concerned. During my own short experience as a soldier I have had to bear arms in more than one campaign wherein I was very doubtful indeed whether the balance of right was not on the side of the enemy. Yet I was, I hope, ready, if fate called for such a sacrifice, to lay down my life. On the whole, the cause of Greece was clear enough for me—under the circumstances.

Keen and cruel were the blasts that swept across Athens between the range of the Parnes hills on the one side and Hymettus on the other. Down the street of the Stadion or race-course the wind seemed to drive with especial vehemence. The street of the Stadion runs obliquely from the Place of the Constitution to the Place of Concord, thus connecting the two extremities of what may be called the fashionable part of the city. The passenger who makes for the Place of Concord, starting from the Place of the Constitution by the way of this Stadion Street, has to his left and behind him the trading, shop-keeping, market-dealing city of Athens. Stadion Street has a few shops at either extremity, but is made up for the most part of private dwelling-houses of the French pattern, with high white or yellow walls, and some banking and other such establishments. Naturally, therefore, as I set out to walk to the Café Solon this night, there was little light but that of the flickering wind-perplexed gas lamps to guide my dismal way. The wind was driving along the centre of the street a very torrent of old newspaper fragments and tattered playing cards and rags and odds and ends of various kinds. The little trees that line either side-walk were writhing and twisting in the fierce gusts, and seemed to groan and whine like human creatures in their distress. Some of them, which were exposed to counter-currents of wind at the corner of a crossing street, appeared likely to be torn up by the roots and flung into the road. There were very few pedestrians or passengers of any kind. Now and then a mule laden with brushwood went groaning by, and the wind, playing sportively with his load, brought out the oddest sound of creaking swishing boughs, a sound like the rattling of a skeleton's dry bones. Overhead there was a ghostly glimmer of light from a cloud-wrapt and watery moon. Some change in the weather is coming; this chill

wind, that pallid moon, those banks of dun cloud, surely bode a downcome of snow. When it snows in Athens it snows with a vengeance. Then the too venturesome stranger who ascends the Acropolis may as likely as not find himself engulfed in a snow drift among the temples and columns with as little chance of quickly getting out of it as if he were in a Siberian valley. Venturesome traveller, surprised by a snowstorm on the Acropolis, be very cautious about your steps. Plunge not hastily forward in your eagerness to escape; take it very cautiously. No *crevasse* in the Alps could be much more dangerous than one of these depths of broken flooring between the pillars, now smoothly covered over and filled in by the snow and looking temptingly like a firm and level stretch of ground. I was thinking over this as I fought my way along Stadion Street this gusty night, and looking up to the livid skies was led to conjectures of coming snow and recollections of one or two adventures on the snow-covered Acropolis and in the snow-clogged Parthenon in old days.

It was not easy work for me to make my way along this storm-swept street. I was encumbered, albeit protected, by a huge heavy blue cloth overcoat or cloak with a peaked hood, a garment familiar to Ægean winds. One who had not known Athens in another season and who had not fought his way along this wind-blown street to-night could not possibly realise the difference between the Athens of spring and autumn and the Athens of winter; between Athens at its best and Athens at its worst. Suppose a stranger were to arrive in the City of the Violet Crown this night for the first time, and sallying forth of his hotel were to see what I am now seeing as his first glimpse of Athens—this long straight monotonous street, monotonous at its best and commonplace, now swept by a howling wind and by a stream of dust and old scraps of paper, and dimly lighted by a watery moon and some gas-lamps that alternately flare and wink—what would be his thoughts as he struggled along it? Perhaps, luckily for him at such a moment, he could have no thoughts. The great business of keeping on his legs, of holding on his hat, and of preventing his overcoat from blowing over his head; perhaps all this would give him enough to do, and would leave him little opportunity for lamenting the Athens of his classic dreams. I shall never forget my own first entrance into Venice. I was very young, I was full of all the eager enthusiasm which poetic youth stores up for Venice. I approached Venice from Bologna, and it was very late when I reached the ‘queen city of the Adriatic,’ as Tristram would call her. It was a wet and windy night. A little storm was blowing, and there was not a gondola

on the canals. I had to trudge from the railway station behind a porter who brought me—he could not help it; there was no other way—through a maze of dirty back slums that might have been in Wapping or the Liverpool docks. We plodded on in almost absolute darkness, now and then crossing some little bridge over a small canal that, for aught one could see, might have been the Irwell at Manchester, and so we fared along until at last we reached the hotel where I was to stay; and this was how I first saw Venice. Let me add, while I am recalling such experiences, that my first sight of Constantinople was sought or rather struggled for in a fog that might have done credit to a London November. It was in late autumn; I had come on the deck of the steamer early that morning in order not to miss by a moment the first sight of Constantinople rising from the waters; and even when the steamer came to an anchor I could see no city rising from any waters, but only a wet fog. It was not until the boat which took us off had come near to the filthy quay that I caught any glimpse of Constantinople. Having thus for the first time seen Venice and Constantinople, it seems almost a pity that this night should not have been the occasion of my first entrance into Athens.

A watery cloud has blotted out the moon, the trees groan and shriek more bitterly than ever, the dust makes a sudden rush as if inspired by a new terror, and wild to escape some coming down-pour, and I am glad to see the friendly lights, although they are not very liberal in their radiance, which shine from the windows of the Café Solon. Now then for shelter, and conspiracy.

## CHAPTER XV.

### IN THE CAFÉ SOLON.

THE Café Solon stands at the nearer end of the Place of Concord; nearer, I mean, to the hotel which was my head-quarters. The Place of Concord is a Frenchified showy square which might just as well be in Paris or the newest part of Vienna as in Athens. But the Café Solon is an especially Athenian institution. It is a great spacious shop, fitted up with counters running all round, and the counters are covered with cases wherein are contained all manner of sweetmeats. At first the Café Solon seems like nothing so much as an American candy store; its properties as a café are not obvious. Soon, however, the visitor observes that at one end of the shop are various little tables, and as the day wears on the candy store gradually resolves itself into a café, and when the weather is fine, spreads its customers all over the pavement and

into the adjacent square. No population that I know of in the world, and I have been in a good many places in my time, can compare with the Athenians in devotion to the habits and the gossip of the café. The thirst for reading the little evening papers and for discussing their scraps of news, much of it distinctly personal, exceeds that of any Parisian crowd. Cast your eyes over the sea of heads rising above little chairs in front of little tables in an Athenian square any fine evening, and you will see the broad living expanse flecked with multitudinous leaflets, white and frequent as the wave crests on the Ægean. Around the pillar-ruins of the great Temple of Jupiter itself, Athenian enterprise sets up coffee-tables in fine weather, and the hurrying waiters cuttle about for orders, and the plain, that might be sacred, is covered with rush-bottomed chairs. The Athenians love to play cards at their coffee-tables as well as to read the papers and to gossip, and after the assembly has broken up in front of a café in one of the squares you may see the ground strewn all over with the wreck of used-up kings and queens and aces. Finally, the stranger will observe that in summer or early autumn not a few of the latest loungers at the café table composedly select a comfortable and quiet corner in one of the narrower streets leading out of the square, and wrap themselves up in a capot and lie down there to sleep the night away. Do not imagine that this is done on the good old principle of the Scottish drinking bout in other days, every man lying where he fell. These open-air sleepers in Athens are usually as sober when they turn in as the most cautious of Her Majesty's judges. Probably a small glass of mastic craftily qualified with water made up the whole of their evening's dissipation. But the poorer classes in Athens and also the more nomadic classes, whether poor or not, have many of the habits of an eastern population, and do not necessarily associate the idea of sleep with the idea of a bedstead beneath the sleeper and a roof over his head.

The Café Solon has a distinct political character. It is open of course to all manner of politicians, but it is a general understanding that the people who go there go to consort with their own particular group of friends, and to discuss politics and make political arrangements. I had often gone there in company with Greek public men, members of the representative chamber, journalists and others; and mine was now a somewhat familiar face. I have an impression that I was generally believed to have some sort of political mission from the English Government. People sometimes asked me in a mysterious way for my opinion as to the probable attitude of England in this or that eventuality, and at the same time hastened to explain that of course they

merely asked for my personal opinion and did not invite me to betray any official confidence. I always took the opportunity of renewing my familiar declaration that I had no political mission whatever, and that I had never spoken to Mr. Gladstone in all my life. These assurances were invariably received in the same way ; that is, with a bow, a smile, a shrug of the shoulders, and a confidential pressure of the hand, all of which said quite as plainly as words could have put it, 'Of course, of course, my dear fellow ; we know all about that, you are quite right in saying so ; it is highly proper that you should say it, and we take it exactly as it is meant.' In truth, much as the Athenians love their little city and are proud of its progress, they do not seem to think it possible that any stranger, at all events any Englishman, could care to make a long stay there. Perhaps this comes in great measure from the fact that Englishmen who have to make any stay in Athens are almost invariably cursing the place all day long. Englishmen, to do them justice, generally hate any foreign place where they have to remain any time ; and they are seldom chary about expressing to the natives of the place their opinion of its demerits. But I have never found Englishmen anywhere in such settled and demonstrative antagonism to a foreign place of residence as in Athens. They grumble over the absence of amusements ; the lack of a theatre—the theatre is not a regular institution in Athens ; it appears and disappears fitfully, like Mr. Punch's show in a London quarter ; they swear perspiringly at the heat in summer, and swear shiveringly at the cold in winter ; they have always the dust to complain of ; they denounce the drinks, the cigarettes, the tobacco ; above and beyond all, they denounce the Greeks. Naturally the Greeks whom I knew, and for many of whom I felt the highest regard, could not believe that I was different from most of my countrymen, who detested Athens, and did not care a straw about the Parthenon ; and they could not believe that I was staying in the City of the Violet Crown without having some solid and practical purpose. Even my old friend Vlachos said once or twice with a smile, that he supposed I must mean to become naturalised as a citizen of Athens, since I was evidently taking up my residence in the place.

A carriage was standing at the door of the Café Solon as I came up, or was driven up, wind-impelled ; and I recognised some of Margarites' servants. This was a little disappointing, to begin with. Conspiracy keeping its carriage and servants waiting at the door while it conspires inside, was something unsatisfactory and unpicturesque. Nor when I entered did I find the condition of things more in accordance with my ideas of political mystery.

The moment I got inside the doors I could hear the loud clear voice of Margarites ringing all over the place. Before I had time to look for him—the lighting of the Café Solon does not remind one of the Boulevard des Italiens—he hailed me by name in a cheery voice and bade me welcome.

I found Margarites at the far end of the room in company with five or six other men, only one of whom was English, and that was my old acquaintance, Colonel Gillow; the others were Greeks. Two of them were personally known to me, and I own that I was surprised to see them under the circumstances. They were the last men in the world I should have expected to find engaged in any manner of secret conspiracy. I had always regarded them as hardworking and keen-witted men of business; men to drive a bargain; men to take rather more than a fair advantage even of a friend in a matter of trade; men whom I never thought of crediting with any interest in the legitimate aspirations of Greece. On the other hand, there were two men unknown to me, who, if they never followed the profession of brigands in the mountains on the frontier, certainly had a very intimate knowledge of persons engaged in that occupation, and had acquired many of their ways of looking at things and their exact local knowledge. I was particularly interested in the hands of one of these men. Brown as those of a Moor, long, lean, sinewy: as they protruded from the stiff snowy circlet of a gorgeous shirt-cuff, they suggested more than ever the mountain-side and the long-barrelled gun. Both these mysterious persons wore ordinary European dress; this one was in evening dress; and the costume of western civilisation only made them look all the less civilised.

This was evidently a sort of representative gathering or council convened for my initiation into the mysteries of the work. We all sat round a table, we smoked cigarettes, and some of us drank brandy and soda. Margarites introduced me with great pomp and form; he had evidently made the utmost possible parade of his new recruit. He was careful to impress upon his friends that I was a soldier by profession, and that they had not to deal with a mere politician or writer of books.

‘Glad to see you with us,’ Colonel Gillow welcomed me, emphatically standing up and shaking me by the hand several times. ‘Gentlemen, my friend Margarites has done well this time. Mr. Cleveland is something better than a spouting rebel or a consumptive parson.’

‘Dear Gillow can’t get over some of my recent introductions,’ Margarites said with a laugh.

‘No, I can’t, by Jupiter; I don’t know what you mean to do



with such fellows. What is the consumptive parson going to turn to? Is he to be chaplain to the forces?' Colonel Gillow laughed boisterously at this joke. The Greeks listened in grave and respectful silence, few of them having any idea of what he was talking about. I should say that, with the exception of one of those whom I mentally classed as retired members of the brigand profession, all the Greeks present spoke either English or French, or both. I did not understand what Colonel Gillow was talking about any more than the Greek who spoke only Greek.

'We must have all sorts of men,' Margarites said carelessly. 'I don't see why we should object to rebels; we are a sort of rebels ourselves. The consumptive parson, as you call him, isn't much of a parson, and he drops the profession altogether with us; otherwise some of our Greek friends here'—and he glanced at my *Fra Diavolo*—'would think his company a little unlucky: there is a sort of superstition about it. We are talking of two friends of yours, my dear Cleveland; your *témoin*, second, Mr. MacMurchad; and Mr. Hathaway the American.'

This was news to me; but of course I expressed no surprise. We had a long talk over plans and prospects, and Margarites professed to explain everything to me with the utmost clearness and candour. I do not mean to weary my readers with Greek or other politics in this story, and only venture on just so much allusion to what was going on as is necessary to make the story itself intelligible. It is enough to say that I found there was a very extensive, and, as it seemed to me, a well organised conspiracy or combination, which had for its object to occupy some of the disputed provinces with an armed force, and thus compel the Greek Government to strike a blow against Turkey, and as a consequence force some of the Western Powers to come to the rescue of Greece. It was all exactly as Vlachos had told me; only it seemed to me to have more formidable proportions than Vlachos supposed. Nothing of an active nature was to be done until the spring; in the mean time there was work enough in preparing for the stroke to be made. I found that English and American associates were especially desired as organisers, because they could go about the country everywhere unsuspected. The English and the Americans always wanted to see everything, and nobody wondered at their curiosity; but the idea of a Greek travelling over Greece for the sake of seeing ruins or excavations, or famous historic places, was out of the question.

I must say that for conspirators we talked in the loudest voices and with the most utter disregard of caution. Our Greek friends sometimes cried out their opinions and suggestions in the

shrillest tones. Anyone who chose might have heard the whole of our discussions. Either it was assumed that the entire population of Athens, native and foreign, was in full sympathy with us, or else we were indifferent to the results of disclosure. Surely, I thought at first, the Government of King George must know all about this; they must be encouraging it: it is simply impossible that there can be any intention of concealing it from them. Yet I had afterwards some reason to suppose that this was part of the policy of Margarites. He did not believe, perhaps, in the possibility of keeping the thing an absolute secret, and was of opinion that the more loudly and openly he talked, the less likely would people be to believe that there was anything serious in it. This began to occur to me as a possible explanation when I saw casual lounge after lounge drop into the café, take his seat not far from us, and apparently listen to all we were saying while he smoked his cigarette.

There were not many loungers, however, in the café this night. The skies frowned at lounging. Before long we had the place all to ourselves. Our little party broke up after about an hour's talk. When we emerged into the open air we found Athens transfigured. The wind was gone; the sky was clear, the ground was covered with snow.

## CHAPTER XVI.

DON BELLIANIS OF GREECE.

'Come with me,' Margarites said; 'this is my carriage: get in; want to take you somewhere; please don't be inquisitive, dear Cleveland; don't ask questions, and don't raise the standard of revolt all so soon.'

I had no particular idea of raising the standard of revolt, and I did not much care whither he was about to take me. We did not exchange many words as we drove through the white, silent streets. A ghastly phantom-like moon showed her livid face. I saw that we were crossing the Square of the Constitution and passing the king's palace. In a few moments we stopped at Mrs. Rosaire's door.

'Come along,' Constantine said. 'We shall find them all awake and active and expectant—of something; they don't quite know what. We will give them a little surprise.'

This was embarrassing. I had little inclination for entering Mrs. Rosaire's house after what had happened; and still less was I inclined to burst in uninvited in this uncereemonious sort of way.

Still, I could hardly think of explaining all this to Margarites; and he was already hurrying upstairs, where he at least was evidently expected. After all, what did it matter? If Mrs. Rosaire looked on me as an intruder, it would not be an intrusion for very long. I followed Margarites. He drew aside a curtain and led the way into one of the drawing-rooms; a smaller room than that in which Mrs. Rosaire welcomed her afternoon company.

It was a pretty sight, that which met our eyes. A painter might have made something attractive of it; converted it perhaps into a pictured story, which mistold all the realities but made a charming scene. The room was softly lighted by lamps shaded in red. The atmosphere was soft and warm, in delicious contrast to the cold, snow-covered raw streets outside, and suggested luxury, refinement, poetry, and sensuous artistic satisfaction. Four persons were grouped in the room: Mrs. Rosaire, Athena, and my two colleagues in conspiracy, MacMurchad and Paul Hathaway. MacMurchad, seated on a very low chair, was holding a huge volume of some sort, a book of engravings perhaps, for Athena to look at, and apparently he was explaining all about it to her. She was leaning with her chin on one hand and looking down upon the pages: her full face turned to me. Mrs. Rosaire was evidently engaged in drawing out Paul Hathaway and making him talk to her; she had the while a slightly bored expression. There was something about all the figures of this little group which made it evident that they were expecting or waiting for something; no human creature ever is quite his ordinary self in attitude and manner when he is expecting anything. It seemed to me that Athena was not altogether absorbed in what MacMurchad was telling her or showing to her; and I was not sorry.

Our coming in roused all the company into mental activity.

Constantine led the way and did the explanation.

'Mrs. Rosaire,' he said, 'and divinest Maid of Athens; I promised you a little surprise to-night, and I keep my word. I bring you my new recruit; this is my offering to the cause which I promised you; this is Greece's youngest soldier.'

MacMurchad gathered himself up in astonishment. A sudden shade of pain passed over Athena's face. Mrs. Rosaire, as far as I could judge, seemed disappointed; she had probably expected something more interesting. Paul Hathaway alone seemed pleased and glad.

'So you have joined us, Kelvin?' Mrs. Rosaire said as she languidly gave me her hand. 'Well, I should not have expected that; I thought you were about the last man—but I fancy somehow you are pressed into the service like myself.'

'No: no: he would join,' Margarites said with a deprecating look at Athena. She frowned slightly, but said nothing. I was standing meanwhile in some embarrassment. Was this a night council of conspiracy? If not, why was everything talked of in this way?

'I come of my own free will,' I said after a moment of embarrassed silence. 'No one asked me or pressed me. I want to be in whatever is going on. I don't know that I am able to do very much at present,' and I glanced at my wounded arm; 'but I shall soon be all right; and I can give a word of advice, and take it, even now.'

Paul Hathaway looked up with an encouraging smile on his thin face.

'I hope,' he said, 'there is room for those who cannot bring thews and sinews to the work. I should think every man, strong or weak, wounded or sound, who can give his heart and can give his brain, ought to be welcome to a good cause.'

'We must confer knighthood on him,' Margarites exclaimed. 'The Maid of Athens shall touch him with a sword, and declare him her knight. Come, lead him up.'

He offered me his arm with grotesque affectation of ceremonial, and led me up to Athena's chair.

'Now kneel down; I go fetch a sword. Where is there a sword, Mrs. Rosaire, to dub this young hero a knight?'

'A sword of my husband's hangs in the outer room,' Mrs. Rosaire said coldly. 'Please take great care of it, Constantine.'

'Don't bring it to me,' Athena said; 'I will have nothing to do with this; Mr. Cleveland is not one of my soldiers. I would have kept him out of the ranks if I could.'

'I am your soldier, your one-armed recruit all the same, Athena. Why do you try to cast me off?'

This was said only for her own hearing. She made no answer. She lay back in her chair; the upper part of her face could hardly be seen. She seemed to withdraw herself from the company and their talk.

'Here is the weapon,' Constantine exclaimed, bringing with him a dainty court sword, whereof the gilded hilt and embossed sheath had done their appointed duty at many a tedious ceremonial. 'Now, fair Maid of Athens—you will not? No? Then Mrs. Rosaire will confer the honour.'

'I don't quite know, Constantine; I think I ought to have been asked first; I don't feel quite sure that I am not offended.'

Mrs. Rosaire, however, was already rising into an attitude of readiness. She held out her hand to take the sword. She loved

all pretty and picturesque foolery. It was in sweet accord with the soft and harmless frivolity of her nature.

‘Kneel, sir knight that is to be,’ she said.

I found myself excessively ridiculous, but the most ridiculous thing now would be to admit any sense of ridicule. I knelt. I have an impression of seeing Athena partly raise her head and then let it sink back again.

Mrs. Rosaire took the sword in her hand and looked along its blade. It had about as warlike an appearance as a girl’s hairpin.

‘My husband’s sword!’ Mrs. Rosaire said in a low and meditative voice. ‘The good sword of a true hero! And it has now no hand but mine to wield it. Oh, Athena, this sword should remind both you and me that we too have a cause, that we have wrongs—and that we are women powerless to avenge them.’

‘Mamma,’ pleaded Athena in a tone of really pathetic remonstrance.

‘My love?’ Mrs. Rosaire paused in her reflections and let the point of the sword fall. It narrowly missed entering my right eye as I rested in my kneeling posture.

‘We are playing a little comedy, dear Mamma; let us leave the tragic out of it, please.’

I am sure that Athena sometimes felt with keen pain that her mother was making herself ridiculous, and that people were tempted to laugh at her. Very rarely did she interfere with even a word to endeavour to keep her from the perilous paths of sentiment and affectation that lead to ridicule. Athena was a proud girl, but full of good sense withal; and she must have known well that in such a matter the less said the better. But I know she often suffered keenly; all the more because she loved her mother dearly, and would too gladly have overlooked her little foolish ways.

‘My daughter is right,’ Mrs. Rosaire said; ‘there are some considerations too serious for an hour like this. But I should not have fancied, Athena, that you would think anything belonging to the cause of your Greece a comedy. However, let us pass from all that and let me knight my soldier—with this sword.’ She tapped me lightly on the shoulder. ‘Arise, Sir Kelvin Cleveland, Knight of the Order of Hellenic Independence. Be faithful, brave—oh, but you will be faithful and brave! and be fortunate; oh, be fortunate.’ She opened her hand and let the sword fall clinking to the ground, and then threw herself back in her chair and closed her eyes. The ceremony was happily over, and I got on my feet.

‘Very prettily done,’ Margarites said approvingly. ‘I never saw anything prettier in my life, You ought to be a Queen of

Beauty, Mrs. Rosaire.' There was a moment's silence. Some of us, I think, felt a little ashamed. But the colour which I saw stealing over Mrs. Rosaire's face was not that of shame. It was the tinge of delighted vanity and self-love. Constantine's words had gone to her heart.

'You are a flatterer, Constantine: all Greeks are,' she murmured. I dare say he would have added some other compliment, but he looked up and saw that Athena's eyes were on him.

Then we got into political conversation, and I found that I was actually among the initiated of the Greek cause; and that of that cause Sarsfield MacMurchad, Irish member of the House of Commons, and the Reverend Paul Hathaway, Unitarian Minister of Boston, Massachusetts, were enlisted soldiers. I could not help asking MacMurchad there and then what was to become of the cause of Ireland while he was far away from its scene of possible struggle. We often thus chaffed MacMurchad in our pleasant English way about the cause of his country. He always put up with our ponderous jocosities in a spirit of the most perfect good temper.

'There's nothing to be done for Ireland in that way just now,' he explained with entire gravity; 'and I have always held, Cleveland, that a man serves the cause of his own country when he shows that he has at heart every other true cause as well. We are in sympathy with every wronged people. It is our duty.'

'Quite so,' was my observation. I noticed that MacMurchad looked very often in the direction of Athena Rosaire's chair, even while he was giving me this explanation.

'Shall I have the pleasure of seeing you among my audience on Sunday?' Hathaway said to me with a hesitating and modest air. 'You have not heard perhaps; I am going to deliver a little address to some of our country-men and -women, English and Americans; a discourse containing some thoughts of mine on the brotherhood of creeds. Mrs. Rosaire has kindly put her rooms at my disposal. It may be the beginning or the germ of something to grow. I hope you will come.'

'Yes, surely you will come, Kelvin,' Mrs. Rosaire added, enforcing her invitation with earnest looks of appeal.

'I shall be glad to come,' I answered. What a slave I am still! Any excuse is welcome that brings me to this house, where nobody wants me!

'Provided it hasn't anything to do with agnosticism or æstheticism I should be glad to hear your oration, Hathaway,' MacMurchad said; 'but we've had too much of these things lately in the west, and I can't stand any more of them.'

'What really is agnosticism?' Mrs. Rosaire asked. 'I think I understand æstheticism, but the other is something newer, is it not?'

'The principle of the so-called agnostic,' Mr. Hathaway began to explain, with his usual blending of eagerness and gentle bashfulness.

'The principle of the agnostic,' I broke in, 'is to begin by telling you that he knows nothing and does not try to know anything about the other world, and end by insisting that he knows all about it, and that there's no such place.'

'But how very wicked! and how inconsistent too, I should call that,' Mrs. Rosaire declared with much earnestness.

'My little discourse will have no concern with agnosticism,' Paul Hathaway hastened to explain. 'I have very little sympathy with the agnostics; it is the duty of every man, even the humblest in intelligence, to try to form a judgment upon the great mysteries of life. But I shall only touch the great principles which, as it seems to me, all true men and women must have as their basis of belief. I think the time is one for drawing together, and not for distinguishing one from another; I would rather seek a bond of union than a line of cleavage.'

'You do so amuse me, you make me droll, you good gentlemen from the United States where everything was born the day before yesterday, coming over here to teach religion to us in the city where Paul preached.' It was Margarites who made this observation.

'I wish I might preach from the Hill of Mars,' Paul said with eager lighting eyes.

'Mr. Hathaway!' Mrs. Rosaire remonstrated.

'Why should not one, however humble, try to continue Paul's work in the city where Paul preached?' Hathaway pleaded. 'I was named after Paul; I would fain follow him in many things.'

'Still, somehow, the idea of preaching on the hill where Paul preached, it seems shocking; impious, I think. I don't like the idea at all.'

'Suppose you get leave from the authorities and try your hand?' I suggested.

'You all smile at me,' Hathaway said; 'but a man does no offence to Paul surely, by trying at whatever humble distance to follow him.'

'I am not inclined to smile at you, Mr. Hathaway,' Athena said; speaking for the first time after a long silence. Indeed, she did not seem inclined to smile at anything that night.

'Oh, no! not you; you never would,' he answered with a grateful look.

Nor was I inclined to smile at Paul Hathaway. I admired his profound earnestness and his generous faith. He believed, as he used to put it himself, in the heart of man and woman. His soul's creed was that the good in every one is so great as to make the evil of small account. He saw God everywhere and the devil nowhere. Even if he could have admitted the presence of the devil he would have endeavoured to make out that there were seeds of better things in him which might some day bring regeneration; he did, indeed, once allude with approval to Burns's pitying hope for 'Auld Nickie ben;' but he said he feared Burns was not quite in earnest when he wrote the lines. It seemed to Hathaway that if you could only bring men and women to see that the moral basis of all their religious and ethical systems was the same, they would forthwith cease to concern themselves in disputes about dogma, and be busy only in trying to work out that principle of the common faith which works for good. I did not see this myself; it appeared to me that every day's experience of actual life showed its futility, at least in what we modestly call civilised communities. But none the less did I admire, even while I compassionated it, the hopeful, childlike spirit which could persuade itself that men and women can be made to believe the same things by assuring them that at bottom they do believe the same things.

'What man wants at the present day,' Hathaway said, 'is a faith which really fills and warms him.'

'Man may want it in New England and in old England, too,' MacMurchad interposed, 'but we have got such a faith in my country, Hathaway, my good fellow. Come there and see.'

'But there is something transcendental——'

'Oh, please don't, Mr. Hathaway,' Mrs. Rosaire pleaded. 'I never could understand anything about transcendentalism. I hope you won't say too much about transcendentalism in your sermon, your address I mean, which you are kind enough to deliver to us on Sunday. I only hope you may convert Lady Lance. I don't quite know what she believes in; I don't think she believes in anything.'

'It would be interesting if one could get at the spiritual experiences of Lady Lance,' I said.

'The daughter, the young lady, seems to have some strivings in an imperfect but not an insincere way after the higher aims of life,' Paul said gently, and looking round among us for confirmation of his words.

'I think she is what these English fellows call spoons on you,



Hathaway,' said Margarites with a laugh; 'if you mean that by striving after the higher aims of life.'

Some of us could not help laughing. Paul got a little embarrassed and coloured slightly, but he said nothing.

'For shame, Constantine,' Mrs. Rosaire remonstrated, looking mightily amused withal. 'How can you talk in that way about a young lady? I am sure even if dear little Nellie were—were at all inclined to be——'

'Spoons,' the unabashed Margarites suggested.

'Whatever you please to call it, she is far too well brought up; at least, I mean, I think, every young lady ought to be too well brought up to let people see it; that is what I mean.'

'Miss Rosaire doesn't like all this stuff,' MacMurchad said. 'I don't wonder. Considering the work we have got in hand, I think we might have more sense.'

This meant in plain English that MacMurchad looked upon Margarites as a mere trifler and buffoon, and that he did not quite see what business Mr. Hathaway's eclecticism, and his preaching, and his views of life had to do in the work of Greek conspiracy. He went over to Athena; she had been sitting a little apart, looking depressed and even sullen.

'I have not been listening,' I heard her say, 'but I think Mr. Hathaway is always in earnest.'

'Oh, I dare say,' MacMurchad answered somewhat hastily; 'that sort of man always is.'

I was not ill-pleased to find that MacMurchad had not taken much by his effort to disassociate himself from his comrades and appeal to Athena as a man more profoundly in earnest than they.

'Why do you say that sort of man?' I heard Athena ask; and I exulted in my secret heart over MacMurchad's confusion and defeat.

We broke up soon after this; Mrs. Rosaire was looking tired, and we had nothing more to say. My first night of initiation into Greek conspiracy and the Greek cause did not seem to have brought a very noble or exalting atmosphere with it. In that room how many were really in earnest? Athena was, and Paul Hathaway, but the Greek cause was only an incident in Paul's career of good works and wishes for all men and women. MacMurchad was in it, partly because he hated oppression in an honest general way, and still more because he did not hate Athena Rosaire. For myself—the reader knows. I suspend judgment as yet upon Margarites; I do not understand him. On the whole, I trust there is a rather better proportion of earnestness at the Café Solon. I approached Athena to say good-night, Google

'Then you will not take my advice,' she said; 'and you will commit yourself to all our work?'

'Yes, Athena; for good or ill.'

'Yet your heart is not given to it,' she said, and she shook her head.

'I am ready to give my heart's blood to it; is not that enough?'

*(To be continued.)*

## By Olive and Pinewood.

WE have started this morning from the pretty *pension* on the hillside with the fixed determination to scale the summit of the Montagne des Oiseaux or else to perish in the attempt. I will not pretend that the feat is a very difficult or dangerous one, for the Montagne des Oiseaux, in spite of its aerial-sounding name, rises only to the height of some fifteen hundred feet above sea level, and involves no more mountaineering than is implied in a rough scramble among brushwood and butcher's broom without the faintest pretence of a track or path. Nevertheless, we consider ourselves adventurous people in our way ; for are we not all invalids and exiles at the *pension*, and would not our medical adviser give us a sound scolding if only he knew that we were going to try our bad lungs with clambering and jumping among the big limestone rocks that cap the summit? However, the climate of the Riviera is wonderfully invigorating—has 'too much champagne in it,' some people say—and though it is many a long year since some of us ever tried going up a hill in England, here we are all waiting on the verandah of our hotel for the last straggler ; 'six precious souls, and all agog to dash through thick and thin!'

I need hardly tell you that every one of us is stopping at the *pension*, since there is nowhere else to stop at in this part of Les Palmiers. For Les Palmiers is one of the Riviera villages, which has already been opened out for visitors, and so there are hotels and villas for their reception in abundance in the town itself, but only this one *pension* among the beautiful opposite pinewoods. This question of opening out, indeed, is one which the average uncosmopolitan Englishman hardly yet understands in its full importance. I know of several beautiful little nooks among the billowy hills over eastward, whose pine-clad peaks face the peacock-blue bays of Bormes and Cavalaire—villages perched on beautiful terraces overlooking the purple Mediterranean, and sheltered from the chilly mistral by a circling amphitheatre of sunny mountains ; and many of these are really far better adapted for health resorts and winter residences than any of the half-protected fashionable towns, where the searching cold wind insinuates its way among the lateral passes, and swoops down upon the houses from behind with icy violence. But nobody has yet begun the *exploitation* of these warm southward corners ; and for an Englishman to live in

any one of them until they have thus been opened out for civilised habitation would be simply impossible. In England, even in our smallest country hamlets, you can almost always find lodgings; and if by any wonderful chance you should happen to light upon a place too rural for a single landlady to pick up a scanty living, you can at least induce some friendly farmer's wife to take you in and make you comfortable, with all the country luxury of fresh eggs, good milk, and newly-picked fruit from the cottage garden. But here in Provence an unopened village consists entirely of little Provençal hovels, filthy in the extreme, with a single *auberge* of inexpressible odours, and a few side alleys where the germs of typhoid and scarlet fever struggle with one another incessantly for the possession of their human prey. Englishmen of the decent classes could no more live in such a place than they could take eligible family residences in a slummy back court near the Seven Dials.

Les Palmiers, however, has long been swept and garnished for the reception of northern visitors, and it has been provided accordingly with numerous villas for the very wealthy, hotels for the rich, and comfortable *pensions* for the use of modest purses. We ourselves belong to the last-named category; and we have pitched our quarters, not in the town itself, but in this pleasant house among the pinewoods, a couple of miles off, with an exquisite view over the sea and the islands, and a magnificent background of green mountain side. These *pensions* are sociable places enough, for most people come to stop the whole winter, and therefore soon become tolerably friendly with one another. And as I have been here often before, and know every inch of the country for ten miles around, I am generally promoted at once to the position of guide, philosopher, and friend to the entire community, with the pleasing duty of escorting half-a-dozen nice girls to hunt for trapdoor spiders and mantises, or to all the points of picturesque interest in the whole district.

We had 'second breakfast' at twelve—a bountiful *déjeuner à la fourchette* after the fashion of the country—and now by half-past one we are all ready for a start, only waiting for the old maid with the botanical case which is always getting mysteriously lost at the last moment. Now, I haven't the least intention of telling you any sensational adventures on the craggy height, or any love-making episodes between the pretty girl with the consumptive brother, and the young landscape painter who has something wrong with the top of his throat; but the fact is, though a great many books have been written about the Riviera of late years—far too many, in my humble opinion—they have mostly been

occupied with medical details of climate or descriptions of the regular round of towns (Nice, Cannes, Monaco, Mentone, San Remo), while none of them have ever attempted to give the stay-at-home world any notion of our ordinary daily life on these sunny shores. Well, it is true, 'everybody has been on the Riviera;' yet I find a not inconsiderable fraction of the British public at home which seems unaccountably to be omitted from the category of somebody; and, for the benefit of these nondescript but numerous persons, I propose to give you a simple account of how we at Les Palmiers manage to get through a single afternoon in our quiet fashion.

At last the old maid with the plant case is ready, and she joins us on the verandah, with her dog in her arms, her French botany book in her hand, and her tin box firmly strapped across her stooping shoulders. A cheery old maid she is too, though crotchety; and as she has positively nothing the matter with her heart, lungs, throat, or digestion, but comes abroad to winter simply for the sake of the sea and the sunshine, she is a pleasant relief after all the 'lungy' people who recount to one their several symptoms once a day with full medical details of the most graphic description. Off we start from the door, and along the high road to the great white villa, where we turn up on the left by a footpath which threads its way tortuously through the pines and the cork oaks.

Most of the villas here are great and white, built of a very pure snowy freestone, and designed in fantastic styles which yet accord prettily enough with the general character of the scenery. Things that we should think rococo and gingerbread in a rural English landscape, look not out of place among these dry hills and funny little market gardens. For all the plain is dotted about already with painted square white boxes or *bastides* by way of cottages, roofed with overlapping red tiles, and surrounded by sombre olive trees or dark walls of black-green cypresses. The garden plots are rectangular and formal, watered by tiny angular canals, and planted with fruit trees or flowers in regular beds and rows. Among such scenery as this, a grey Elizabethan manor-house or a mediæval castle would look wholly incongruous; while a pure white villa, quaintly adorned with domes and minarets, or with bastard Byzantine arches, or with funny little Spanish turrets, pieces in well enough after its own theatrical fashion. The Promenade des Anglais at Nice and the western quarter at Cannes are full of such freaks of architectural fancy, each in its way a miracle of bad taste from the high æsthetic standpoint, yet all contributing to make up a curiously effective picture in the mass—a scene-

painter's paradise crystallised down into solid stone by a sudden wave of Fairy Capital's wand. Here at Les Palmiers we are only beginning as yet to arrive at that fashionable stage; but there are even now a fair number of queer, gleaming *châteaux* sprinkled among the dark green pine-groves, and there are many more at present rising up in meretricious splendour upon the flower-covered plain that stretches gaily at our feet.

Our path leads us first among the olive terraces into which the whole lower part of the hill has been sedulously built up. I don't know that olives are beautiful at first sight: indeed, I am not sure that I would not say the same about the whole scenery of the Riviera. For my own part, I am a hardened cosmopolitan of the deepest dye, who, like Odysseus, have seen many cities of men and known their manners; so that at the present time of day I can hardly throw myself back into the position of the untravelled Englishman who comes for the first time in his life among these dry and sombre Ligurian hills. I was born and raised (as the Yankees say) in an equally arid corner of America, and I have lived in many other almost rainless countries before I ever set eyes upon the baked and basking Provençal coast. But I can readily understand that to eyes accustomed to the fresh dewy verdure of English fields, these bare, grey, grassless hillsides may look at first sight singularly dreary and unprepossessing. In fact, I know, as a matter of experience, that many tourists who come here for their first trip, without ever having got farther before than Paris or the Rhine, are dreadfully disappointed on arrival at the general dryness and desolateness of the scenery. 'Is this the Riviera that we have heard so much about?' they ask one reproachfully: 'we never saw anything half so ugly in the whole course of our lives.' And yet these same people, after two or three months' habituation to the unfamiliar style of beauty, learn to love those same dry hills and bare white limestone crags, not only as the visible symbol of a delicious climate, but also for their own innate loveliness of shape, and colour, and variety, and vegetation.

To say the truth, we English owe to our abominable climate the chief beauties of our native scenery, and we cannot get away from the one without at the same time getting away from the other. Our ideal of the country is one of noble forest trees, green grass, beautiful lawns and parks, interminable stretches of sward-covered downs. But to have that exquisite and restful greenery, especially in the form of close pasturage like that of our English sheep-walks, you must necessarily have a very humid and rainy climate. Our own corner of north-western Europe, exposed to the moisture-laden clouds which blow perpetually across the face of the

Atlantic, has a rainfall sufficient to make Ireland into an emerald isle, and to give England, northern France, and Belgium a fair carpet of evergreen grasses. Hence most Englishmen grow up to look upon their own exceptional scenery and greenery as the type of what they ought to find in the rest of the world; and when they go elsewhere and discover a drier climate, with its necessary concomitant of browner and drier types of vegetation, they feel much disposed to grumble at the stupidity of nature, which refuses to combine a humid flora with an arid atmosphere for the special delectation of the human race.

On the Provençal hills it must at once be admitted that the general aspect of life is very parched and grey. Taking a whole hill-side together, indeed, covered with great stone-pines and evergreen oaks, you often get from a little distance a magnificent sheet of vivid verdure: but as you mount the hills in detail you find no grass or other greensward; its place is taken by bare, thirsty soil, thinly covered with grey rosemary, whitish juniper bushes, and the powdery foliage of the sage-leaved cistus. To unaccustomed eyes, this sere and solemn vegetation has a very painful and monotonous effect: it is only after some habituation that an English visitor learns to look upon it, first with composure, then with faint liking, and finally with positive pleasure and gratification.

The first stage of our journey lies through the olive terraces, as I tried to say before when I was run away with by one of my usual discursive digressions: and the olives are one among the most typical of these dry southern plants. Their trunks are gnarled and knotted with a thousand strange twists and scars; their foliage is greyish green with a glaucous sobriety of hue; and their ripe berries are dark and bitter and unattractive. The first sight of an olive grove is distinctly disappointing; the trees all look half dead and faded, like a bunch of sweet herbs hung up on an old-fashioned kitchen rafter to dry. Yet in time one learns to love that sombre southern colour: it seems to contrast well with the brilliant blue of the sky, the purple of the sea, the fresh green of the pine-clad mountain side. The terraces on which the olives grow at Les Palmiers are as curious as the trees themselves. Age after age, they have been created by the slow industry of the Provençal peasantry, working not for themselves so much as for those that come after them. Each terrace is bounded by a rough stone wall on its lower side, which keeps the soil from being washed down the hill by the autumn torrents; and between the wall above and the wall below stretches a level expanse of dry terrace, almost bare but for the olive trees themselves, and now thickly covered by wilted windfalls of the ripe fruit. Seen from below, this part of

the hill looks like a huge staircase, each wall with its corresponding strip of terrace answering in imagination to one gigantic step.

We wind our way up the terraces by a zigzag path, which runs from side to side so as to allow the proprietor access to his trees; and as this is the season of the olive vintage, we are careful to keep from treading on the fallen berries, or from straying sideways off the narrow stony path. The peasant owner is busy picking at this very moment, and he salutes us cheerily from the limb on which he sits astride, basket in hand, with a polite wave of his hat, and a kindly 'Bonjour, Messieurs et Mesdames.' Your Provençal peasant, in spite of his red sash, his brigand-like appearance, and his advanced radical or revolutionary tendencies, is not half a bad fellow if you take him the right way uppermost. To be sure, he does not like the casual tourists who knock down his laborious stone walls by clambering illegally over the terraces; and he often sets his yelling dog Liben about the legs of ill-advised persons who go hunting anemones and jonquils among the precincts of his fruiting vineyards: but then we must remember that a Lincolnshire farmer would not be particularly polite to a party of Frenchmen who made their way carelessly from field to field across his standing corn, and that a Welsh farmer loves not the intrusive Saxon who leaves the gates open for sheep to stray from his mountain pastures up the unfenced wastes of Cader or the Glyders. On the other hand, if you are careful to keep to the regular paths as long as you remain within the zone of cultivation, and if you avoid breaking down walls or stealing cultivated flowers (grown as a market crop), the peasant proprietor is quite profuse in his gratitude for your negative virtue, and caps you every time he meets you with a broad smile on his brown tanned face, and a friendly twinkle in his wicked black eye. To him the irruption of the northern barbarians in tweed suits and blue serge dresses has been simply and solely an unmitigated nuisance; for he has no scot or lot in the big hotels or the profits of the hated *bourgeoisie*; and he had as good a market before for his oil, his fruits, and his flowers, in Paris or London; but he accepts the logic of facts with cheery good-nature, and is amply satisfied if the inarticulate-speaking mad English will but kindly refrain from doing positive mischief to his land and crops.

Above the level of olives the path turns abruptly to the right, and we find ourselves at once among the native forest of firs and cork oaks. By the side of the deserted lime-kiln, where the mortar used to be procured for the white *château* and the red-roofed *pension*, we sit down awhile to take in the view beneath us. We have risen already a few hundred feet, and even now the



whole plain and the hills beyond lie spread out like a map before our eyes. In the nearer foreground the spurs and shoulders of the Montagne des Oiseaux run out in divergent fingers, covered here with primitive pinewood, carved out there into artificial terraces, and planted in long lines yonder with alternate rows of trellised vines and flowering narcissus plants. A little beyond, the range dies away seaward in the low promontory of the hermitage, crowned by the gleaming white pilgrimage chapel of the fishermen, its Romanesque tower surmounted by a colossal marble statue of Our Lady the Pearl of the Seas. The middle distance sinks into the cultivated alluvial plain, a perfect labyrinth of gardens, canals, cottages, roads, villas, and orange orchards, all mingled up pell-mell with gigantic cypress hedges, and diversified by the waving date palms which give their name to the little town beyond. Seen in this mellow afternoon haze, the view takes a delightfully Eastern tinge; and if only we could substitute a string of stately camels and a white-robed Arab driver, for the slow Provençal mule waggon and the red-belted peasant carter on the long, white, dusty road, I could almost imagine myself looking down on some peaceful wady of Lower Syria. Farther still, beyond the valley rise the grey limestone peaks of the Castle Hill and its sister pinnacles, with the innumerable villas and hotels of Les Palmiers gleaming white in the sunshine along its slopes and at its base. Farthest of all, above and behind the little range on which the town is built, the main Provençal mountains and the Maritime Alps tower boldly into the sky, their alternate domes and *aiguilles* covered with unbroken sheets of snow, or scarred between the rifts by open shoulders of naked black rock. Throw in the dazzling brilliancy of a cloudless Provençal sky, and even I, who am a lover of England more than any Englishman born, am forced to admit that you won't get many such days or many such views as that in a British winter.

Ten minutes are allowed for rest and refreshment at the lime-kiln, and then we all get under weigh again; but lest I should be misunderstood by the carnally-minded reader I should like to add that refreshment does not include cakes and ale, being strictly confined to mental food in the shape of an instructive lecture from our spinster botanist on the various species of juniper which grow on the platform around us. This lecture is received with marked superciliousness by the three pretty girls of the party; with studied politeness by the two consumptive young men; and with respectful thankfulness by the middle-aged guide of the party in person. However, our old maid is not a person to be

put down by a set of giggling young hussies; and she persists in making the best of every halt on our journey with a devotion worthy of a more attractive cause. From the lime-kiln onward, we have no path to help us; we have to scramble, as best we may, over stones and rock, much obscured and encumbered by dry heath, prickly cytissus, and the straggling, crisp-leaved, holly-like scrub of the dwarf evergreen oaks. Here the maiden lady has her revenge. For the three pretty girls wear kid boots with rather high heels, which get torn and mangled sadly by the thorns and branches; whereas the maiden lady wears a solid pair of honest beetle-crushers, which defy the worst endeavours of the very thorniest brushwood. Now, ungallant as I may be to say so, though I am not insensible to the native merits of a pretty face, I will confess that the old maid has here my warmest sympathy; and when one of the high-heeled boots trips up its owner over a projecting root of cork oak, I mutter in my heart the time-honoured British verdict, 'Serves her right.'

It is curious, too, how hard it is to avoid slipping on dry rocks and earth. In England, we only find the ground slippery after continued rain, and a wet path is our single idea of a difficult one. But the truth is that a moderate amount of moisture helps to give one a foothold; and on these very dry hills it is quite ridiculous how one tumbles about for want of a firm purchase. Little English children, especially, fresh from our northern green-sward and our moist earth, go on falling down all day long, until they get their southern legs, so to speak. The difficulty of getting a foothold here adds materially to the troubles of climbing among the heath and rosemary, which is of itself no small trial to skirts and trousers. At last, however, after about an hour's pull through the tangled brushwood, we reach the very top of the mountain, and get another splendid and wider view over land and sea together.

Southward beneath us lies the Mediterranean, calm and blue as the sky that it mirrors, and broken up coastwise into innumerable bays and roadsteads by a long procession of rocky islets and tumbling promontories. Just at our feet, and due southward as we look towards the sun, the beautiful little cove of Carqueyranne shines golden in a flood of light. Above it rises a great bald mountain, like a titanic ash-heap, the *Colle Nègre* of Provençal idiom, ridiculously mistranslated into Parisian French as the *Col Noir*. But of course *Colle* has nothing to do with *Col*, being in reality the Provençal form of Latin *Collis*: and one would have thought that even a Parisian would have seen the transparent absurdity of describing a peak as a pass. On its bare top the

Government is constructing one of those vast forts which ring round the whole coast and frontier of France, being meant, no doubt, as visible symbols of fraternity and solidarity to Teutonic and Italian brethren beyond the borders. Past Carqueyranne and the Colle, the eye ranges into the two land-locked roadsteads of Toulon, and the white basking villas and *bastides* that surround that sun-smitten port. In and out the coastline winds with endless curves and sinuosities; here, the waterway expands into the great harbour, commanded by the big guns of Fort Ste. Marguérite; there, it sweeps round into the exquisite Golfe du Lazaret; and yonder once more, it narrows between two projecting points to form the entrance of the little circular inner harbour, on whose border basks the long white town, and the great girdling zone of fortifications. With our field-glass we can make out the gateways of the city, the ships in the great dockyards, and the innumerable white villas that stud the neighbouring hills. Beyond all in this direction, three huge blocks of mountain close the south-westward view. The farthest is the triple-peaked peninsular mass of Cap Siciér, crowned by the pilgrimage chapel of Notre Dame de La Garde, and stretching out a long finger seaward in the hilly point of Cap Cépet, that almost encloses the outer harbour in its embrace. The two nearer are the Faron and the Coudon, well-known sea-marks along all the Provençal coast, and wonderfully beautiful in this dazzling sunlight, with their white, stony summits, and their numberless lateral spurs and shoulders.

South-eastward, we get another and totally distinct view. Here the open expanse of sea is broken, not by winding promontories, but by a continuous succession of hilly islands. The nearest, by name Giens, has been rudely converted into a peninsula by two strange banks of sand and shingle, which unite it at either end to the opposite mainland, exactly as the Chesil Beach unites the Isle of Portland to the Dorsetshire coast. The space between these two curving belts of gravel forms a shallow lagoon, divided up into rectangular salt-pans with true southern symmetry and regularity. We look down into them from the summit here, with a perfect bird's-eye view; and we can see the salt water actually stewing and evaporating in the sunshine before our very eyes. Each pan is separated from its neighbours by a long straight partition; and some of them are full and deep, having just begun their process, while others are shallow and almost dry, having nearly completed it. On the sides, by the shore, the salt itself is piled up in little gleaming heaps, like haycocks in shape and like snow in colour; while beyond in the offing a number of ships ride at anchor, waiting to be laden with their cargo from the neigh-

bouring pans. Farther on, three genuine islands continue the line of march in single file, like summits of a submarine ridge appearing above the water's edge, as no doubt they are. First comes Porquerolles with its village and soda works; next Porcros with its smaller hamlet; and last of all the almost uninhabited Ile du Titan, a mass of cork-covered hillsides, bearing no mark of human occupation except its tall lighthouse. Easternmost of all, the view in this direction closes with the long promontory of Cap Bénac, capped near its southern extremity by the picturesque fort of Brégançon.

I won't describe the inland view once more, as it is only a larger form of the one we got from the lime-kiln; but I can't help adding that the snowy Alps about the Col de Tende and the Italian border have now risen into still greater grandeur, and extend in a longer sierra right across the north-eastern horizon. Sitting here in the bright sunshine on the edge of the limestone crags that form the summit of the Montagne des Oiseaux, we can make out every ridge and peak along that great belt even with the naked eye; while the field-glass brings out the passes, spurs, and snowdrifts in deep relief against the fathomless background of blue. How they soar into the sky, those spotless white domes and needles, shimmering with infinite crystals in the bright sunlight, and with what a sense of restfulness one's eye turns from that distant focus, to the pretty little blue globularies and yellow flaxes that grow beside our feet! What a relief it is to relax the straining effort in one's eyeballs, looking a hundred miles off into the transparent air, and to fix them instead on the crimson and orange berries of the arbutus hard by, or the deep red clusters of the sarsaparilla that clambers in wild luxuriance over the stunted oak-scrub! In an English winter, we would pay anything on earth for one such day and one such view as this; here, we take it as part of the ordinary course of nature, and grumble because the wind blows a little chilly round our shoulders on this bare top, fifteen hundred feet above the sea that plays imperceptibly upon the beach beneath.

We rest twenty minutes at the top—allowance made for invalids—and then, having drunk in the view and the air long enough, we begin our downward way again. Of course, as there is no path, and you can't see your landmarks for the pinewoods, we miss our road half-a-dozen times over, and have no little difficulty in extricating the three younger ladies from the forest of underbrush. As for the elderly spinster, she marches on steadily in front of the party, with her dog a yard or so before her, picking endless specimens by the way, and consigning them calmly to her

little tin box, with the air of a person to whom distance or fatigue is a matter of no importance. At last, we get down again to a remembered *col*, a low depression between two adjacent spurs, and see the four tasteless square bare walls of a staring and glaring brand-new villa, erected on the slope of the mountain, of course by an English Duke. (I say *of course*, for you may be certain if there is a piece of bad taste to be perpetrated anywhere our hereditary aristocrats are sure to be equal to the occasion.) Off we make for the Duke's, then, mentally contrasting its hideous insular squareness, like a British workhouse transplanted and white-washed, with the fantastic quaintness of San Salvador, the *château* which a Paris journalist is raising for himself in the valley beyond. Then we wind round green hillsides, clothed from head to foot with small Provençal firs, and interspersed at intervals with huge overshadowing umbrella pines, till we reach the high road below among the region of olives, vines, and hedgerow roses. From that point to our *pension* is but a mile, and thither we return in time to see the Major and the Chaplain finishing their great game of lawn tennis against the Bishop and the Doctor, while we take afternoon tea quietly on the terrace, or refresh ourselves after our mountaineering labours with the forbidden but not forsaken cheroot.

So wags our little life from day to day. I won't deny that one day is very much like another, to be sure; and people who demand the feverish excitement of Nice and Monte Carlo no doubt pronounce Les Palmiers insupportably slow. But, for my part, I like quiet and the country, and I reflect with pleasure that if Mr. Alfred Tennyson once observed 'Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay,' it was the self-same Mr. Tennyson who wrote the 'Lotus-eaters,' and who supplied us all with an excellent set of excuses for living in a land in which it seemeth always afternoon. Now, our arrangements here give us about as much afternoon as can possibly be imported into twenty-four normal hours; for we have *déjeuner* at twelve sharp, and from one till sunset we are our own masters. During those four or five delightful hours, we have nothing to do but to bask in the garden under the orange trees, to play tennis under the shade of the eucalyptus, or to climb the dry hillsides beneath the sheltering pinewood. Of course we alter our *menu* a little from day to day: on Monday, it may be, we wander down to the seashore and pick up pretty Mediterranean shells upon the tideless beach; on Tuesday, we lounge and loiter under the olive groves; on Wednesday, we drive farther afield among the wild limestone hills to northward; and on Thursday, we take a boat to thread the rocky channels

between the interminable tiny islets of the archipelago in front. But, whatever the day's programme may be, we are generally pretty sure of a dazzling sky, a cool breeze, and that delicious air which always braces and invigorates us here, except on the rare days when the mistral comes down in full force to warp us with its ten-east-wind power of dry chilliness. If life were all beer and skittles, there would be few things more delightful than unmixed lotus-eating among these delicious Provençal pinewoods.

But alas! life is *not* all beer and skittles; on the contrary, it is according to Mrs. Gamp a 'wale of tears,' and according to Mr. Herbert Spencer 'the continuous adjustment of inner and outer relations.' Without attempting to decide between these two high authorities, I can at least conscientiously declare that this sort of existence is too sybaritically luxurious for my own private tastes, and if I did not fill up my mornings by writing this and other articles for the benefit of the stay-at-home majority, time would doubtless hang a little heavily upon my usually busy hands. As it is, I can only wish that it was always afternoon, and that winter lasted for ever on the Riviera. May I come here many more seasons in future, and may I always find as bright a sky above me as that which greeted us to-day on the breezy summit of the Montagne des Oiseaux!

J. ARBUTHNOT WILSON.

## Heart and Science.

A STORY OF THE PRESENT TIME.

BY WILKIE COLLINS.

*(The right of translation is reserved.)*

### CHAPTER LI.

WATCHING through the night by Carmina's bedside, Teresa found herself thinking of Mr. Le Frank. It was one way of getting through the weary time, to guess at the motive which had led him to become a lodger in the house.

Ordinary probabilities pointed to the inference that he might have reasons for changing his residence, which only concerned himself. In that case, a common coincidence would account for his having become Teresa's fellow-lodger. She would have found little difficulty in adopting this view, but for certain recollections which made her hesitate. She had first met Mr. Le Frank at Mrs. Gallilee's house; and she had been so disagreeably impressed by his personal appearance, that she had even told Carmina 'the music-master looked like a rogue.' With her former prejudice against him now revived, and with her serious present reasons for distrusting Mrs. Gallilee, she rejected the idea of his accidental presence under her landlady's roof. Other women, in her position and animated by her feeling of distrust, might have asked themselves, if he had a purpose of his own, or a purpose of Mrs. Gallilee's to serve. Teresa's vehement and impulsive nature, incapable of deliberately considering such questions as these, rushed blindfold to the right conclusion—that the music-master was employed as Mrs. Gallilee's spy. While Mr. Le Frank was warily laying his plans for the next day, he had himself become an object of suspicion to the very woman whose secrets he was plotting to surprise.

This was the longest and saddest night which the faithful old nurse had passed at her darling's bedside.

For the first time, Carmina was fretful, and hard to please: patient persuasion was needed to induce her to take her medicine. Even when she was thirsty, she had an irritable objection to being disturbed, if the lemonade was offered to her which she had relished at other times. Once or twice, when she drowsily stirred in her bed, she showed symptoms of delusion. The poor girl supposed it was the eve of her wedding-day, and eagerly asked what Teresa had

done with her new dress. A little later, when she had perhaps been dreaming, she fancied that her mother was still alive, and repeated the long forgotten talk of her childhood. 'What have I said to distress you?' she asked wonderingly, when she found Teresa crying.

Soon after sunrise, there came a long interval of repose. At the later time when Benjulia arrived, she was quiet and uncomplaining. The unfavourable symptoms which had induced Teresa to insist on sending for him, were all perversely absent. Mr. Null expected to be roughly rebuked for having disturbed the great man by a false alarm. He attempted to explain: and Teresa attempted to explain. Benjulia paid not the slightest attention to either of them. He made no angry remarks—and he showed, in his own impenetrable way, as gratifying an interest in the case as ever.

'Draw up the blind,' he said; 'I want to have a good look at her.'

Mr. Null waited respectfully, and imposed strict silence on Teresa, while the investigation was going on. It lasted so long that he ventured to say, 'Do you see anything particular, sir?'

Benjulia saw his doubts cleared up; time (as he had anticipated) had brought development with it, and had enabled him to arrive at a conclusion. The shock that had struck Carmina had produced complicated hysterical disturbance, which was now beginning to simulate paralysis. Benjulia's profound and practised observation detected a trifling inequality in the size of the pupils of the eyes, and a slightly unequal action on either side of the face—delicately presented in the eyelids, the nostrils, and the lips. Here was no common affection of the brain, which even Mr. Null could understand! Here, at last, was Benjulia's reward for sacrificing the precious hours which might otherwise have been employed in the laboratory! From that day, Carmina was destined to receive unknown honour: she was to take her place, along with the other animals, in his note-book of experiments.

He turned quietly to Mr. Null, and finished the consultation in two words:

'All right!'

'Have you nothing to suggest, sir?' Mr. Null inquired.

'Go on with the treatment—and draw down the blind, if she complains of the light. Good day.'

'Are you sure he's a great doctor?' said Teresa, when the door had closed on him.

'The greatest we have!' cried Mr. Null with enthusiasm.

'Is he a good man?'

'Why do you ask?'



‘I want to know if we can trust him to tell us the truth?’

‘Not a doubt of it!’ (who could doubt it, indeed, after he had approved of Mr. Null’s medical treatment?)

‘There’s one thing you have forgotten,’ Teresa persisted. ‘You haven’t asked him when Carmina can be moved.’

‘My good woman, if I had put such a question, he would have set me down as a fool! Nobody can say when she will be well enough to be moved.’

He took his hat. The nurse followed him out.

‘Are you going to Mrs. Gallilee, sir?’

‘Not to-day.’

‘Is she better?’

‘She is almost well again.’

## CHAPTER LII.

LEFT by herself, Teresa went into the sitting-room: she was afraid to let Carmina see her. Mr. Null had destroyed the one hope which had supported her thus far—the hope of escaping with Carmina before Mrs. Gallilee could interfere. Looking steadfastly at that inspiring prospect, she had forced herself to sign the humble apology and submission which the lawyers had dictated to her. What was the prospect now? Heavily had the merciless hand of calamity fallen on that brave old soul—and, at last, it had beaten her down! While she stood at the window, mechanically looking out, the dreary view of the back street trembled and disappeared. Teresa was crying.

Happily for herself, she was unable to control her own weakness: the tears lightened her heavy heart. She waited a little, in the fear that her eyes might betray her, before she returned to Carmina. In that interval, she heard the sound of a closing door, on the floor above.

‘The music-master!’ she said to herself.

In an instant, she was at the sitting-room door, looking through the keyhole. It was the one safe way of watching him—and that was enough for Teresa. His figure appeared suddenly within her narrow range of view—on the mat outside the door. If her distrust of him was without foundation, he would go on downstairs. No! He stopped on the mat to listen—he stooped—*his* eye would have been at the keyhole in another moment. She seized a chair, and moved it. The sound instantly drove him away. He went on, down the stairs.

Teresa considered with herself what safest means of protection—and, if possible, of punishment as well—lay within her reach. How, and where, could the trap be set that might catch him?

She was still puzzled by that question, when the landlady made her appearance—politely anxious to hear what the doctors thought of their patient. Satisfied so far, the wearisome woman had her apologies to make next, for not having yet cautioned Mr. Le Frank.

‘Thinking over it, since last night,’ she said confidentially, ‘I cannot imagine how you heard him walking about overhead. He has such a soft step that he positively takes me by surprise when he comes into my room. He has gone out for an hour; and I have done him a little favour which I am not in the habit of conferring on ordinary lodgers—I have lent him my umbrella, as it threatens rain. In his absence, I will ask you to listen while I walk about in his room. One can’t be too particular, when rest is of such importance to your young lady—and it has struck me as just possible, that the floor of his room may be in fault. My dear, the boards may creak! I am a sad fidget, I know; but, if the carpenter can set things right—without any horrid hammering, of course!—the sooner he is sent for, the more relieved I shall feel.’

Through this long harangue, Teresa had waited, with a patience far from characteristic of her, for an opportunity of saying a timely word. By some tortuous mental process that she was quite unable to trace, the landlady’s allusion to Mr. Le Frank had suggested the very idea of which, in her undisturbed solitude, she had been vainly in search. Never before, had the mistress of the house appeared to Teresa in such a favourable light.

‘You needn’t trouble yourself, ma’am,’ she said, as soon as she could make herself heard; ‘it *was* the creaking of the boards that told me somebody was moving overhead.’

‘Then I’m not a fidget after all? Oh, how you relieve me! Whatever the servants may have to do, one of them shall be sent instantly to the carpenter. So glad to be of any service to that sweet young creature!’

Teresa consulted her watch before she returned to the bedroom.

The improvement in Carmina still continued: she was able to take some of the light nourishment that was waiting for her. As Benjulia had anticipated, she asked to have the blind lowered a little. Teresa drew it completely over the window: she had her own reasons for tempting Carmina to repose. In half-an-hour more, the weary girl was sleeping, and the nurse was at liberty to set her trap for Mr. Le Frank.

Her first proceeding was to dip the end of a quill pen into her bottle of salad oil, and to lubricate the lock and key of the door that gave access to the bedroom from the stairs. Having satisfied herself that the key could now be used without making the

slightest sound, she turned to the door of communication with the sitting-room next.

This door was covered with green baize. It had handles but no lock ; and it swung inwards, so as to allow the door of the cupboard (situated in the angle of the sitting-room wall) to open towards the bedroom freely. Teresa oiled the hinges, and the brass bolt and staple which protected the baize door on the side of the bedroom. That done, she looked again at her watch.

Mr. Le Frank's absence was expected to last for an hour. In five minutes more, the hour would expire.

After bolting the door of communication, she paused in the bedroom, and wafted a kiss to Carmina, still at rest. She then left the room, by the door which opened on the stairs, and locked it, taking away the key with her.

Having gone down the first flight of stairs, she stopped and went back. The one unsecured door, was the door which led into the sitting-room from the staircase. She opened it and left it invitingly ajar. 'Now,' she said to herself, 'I've got him!'

The hall clock struck the hour when she entered the landlady's room.

The woman of many words was at once charmed and annoyed. Charmed to hear that the dear invalid was resting, and to receive a visit from the nurse: annoyed by the absence of the carpenter, at work somewhere else for the whole of the day. 'If my dear husband had been alive, we should have been independent of carpenters; he could turn his hand to anything. Now do sit down—I want you to taste some cherry brandy of my own making.'

As Teresa took a chair, Mr. Le Frank returned. The two secret adversaries met, face to face.

'Surely I remember this lady?' he said.

Teresa encountered him, on his own ground. She made her best curtsy, and reminded him of the circumstances under which they had formerly met. The hospitable landlady produced her cherry brandy. 'We are going to have a nice little chat; do sit down, sir, and join us.' Mr. Le Frank made his apologies. The umbrella which had been so kindly lent to him, had not protected his shoes; his feet were wet; and he was so sadly liable to take cold that he must beg permission to put on his dry things immediately. Having bowed himself out, he stopped in the passage, and, standing on tiptoe, peeped through a window in the wall, by which light was conveyed to the landlady's little room. The two women were comfortably seated together, with the cherry brandy and a plate of biscuits on a table between them. 'In for a good long gossip,' thought Mr. Le Frank. 'Now is my time!'

Not five minutes more had passed, before Teresa made an excuse for running upstairs again. She had forgotten to leave the bell rope, in case Carmina woke, within reach of her hand. The excellent heart of the hostess made allowance for natural anxiety. 'Do it, you good soul,' she said; 'and come back directly!' Left by herself, she filled her glass again, and smiled. Sweetness of temper (encouraged by cherry brandy) can even smile at a glass—unless it happens to be empty.

Approaching her own rooms, Teresa waited, and listened, before she showed herself. No sound reached her through the half open sitting-room door. She noiselessly entered the bedroom, and then locked the door again. Once more she listened; and once more there was nothing to be heard. Had he seen her?

As the doubt crossed her mind, she heard the boards creak on the floor above. Mr. Le Frank was in his room.

Did this mean that her well-laid plan had failed? Or did it mean that he was really changing his shoes and stockings? The last inference was the right one.

Le Frank had made no mere excuse downstairs. The serious interests that he had at stake, were not important enough to make him forget his precious health. His chest was delicate; a cold might settle on his lungs. The temptation of the half-open door had its due effect on Mr. Le Frank; but it failed to make him forget that his feet were wet.

The boards creaked again; the door of his room was softly closed—then there was silence. Teresa only knew when he had entered the sitting-room, by hearing him try the bolted baize door. After that, he must have stepped out again. He next tried the door of the bed-chamber, from the stairs.

There was a quiet interval once more. Teresa noiselessly drew back the bolt; and, opening the door by a mere hair's-breadth, admitted sound from the sitting-room. She heard him turn the key in a cheffonier, which only contained tradesmen's circulars, receipted bills, and a few books.

(Even with the cupboard before him, waiting to be searched, his uppermost idea was to find in Carmina's papers, the proof of Carmina's intrigues!)

The contents of the cheffonier disappointed him—judging by the tone in which he muttered to himself. The next sound startled Teresa; it was a tap against the lintel of the door behind which she was standing. He had thrown open the cupboard.

The rasping of the cover, as he took it off, told her that he had begun by examining the canister. She had put it back in the cupboard, a harmless thing now—the poison and the label having

been both destroyed by fire. Nevertheless, his choosing the canister, from dozens of other things scattered about it on the shelf, inspired her with a feeling of distrustful surprise. She was no longer content to find out what he was doing by means of her ears. Determined to see him, and to catch him in the fact, she pulled open the baize door—at the moment when he must have discovered that the canister was empty. A faint thump told her he had thrown it on the floor.

She had forgotten the cupboard door.

Now that it was wide open, it covered the entrance to the bedroom, and completely screened them one from the other. For the moment she was startled, and hesitated whether to show herself or not. His voice stopped her.

‘Perhaps, there’s another?’ he said to himself. ‘The dirty old savage may have hidden it ——’ She heard no more. ‘The dirty old savage’ was an insult not to be endured! She forgot her intention of stealing on him unobserved; she forgot her resolution to do nothing that could awaken Carmina. Her fierce temper urged her into furious action. With both hands outspread, she flew at the cupboard door, and banged it to in an instant.

A shriek of agony rang through the house. The swiftly closing door had caught, and crushed, the fingers of Le Frank’s right hand, at the moment when he was putting it into the cupboard again.

Without stopping to help him, without even looking at him, she ran back to Carmina. The swinging baize door fell to, and closed of itself. No second cry was heard. Nothing happened to falsify her desperate assertion that the shriek was the delusion of a vivid dream. She took Carmina in her arms, and patted and fondled her like a child. ‘See, my darling, I’m with you as usual; and I have heard nothing. Don’t, oh don’t tremble in that way! There—I’ll wrap you up in my shawl, and read to you. No! let’s talk of Ovid.’

Her efforts to compose Carmina were interrupted by a muffled sound of men’s footsteps and women’s voices in the next room. She hurriedly opened the door, and entreated them to whisper and be quiet. In the instant before she closed it again, she saw and heard. Le Frank lay in a swoon on the floor. The landlady was kneeling by him, looking at his injured hand; and the lodgers were saying, ‘Send him to the hospital.’

## CHAPTER LIII.

ON Monday morning, the strain on Mrs. Gallilee's powers of patient endurance came to an end. With the help of Mr. Null's arm, she was able to get downstairs to the library. Having rested awhile, she could rise, and walk to and fro by herself. Opening a book, she read the pages easily; the lines were no longer all blurred and mingled together. On Tuesday, there would be no objection to her going out for a drive. Mr. Null left her, restored to her equable flow of spirits. He had asked if she wished to have somebody to keep her company—and she had answered briskly, 'Not on any account! I prefer being alone.'

On the morning of Saturday, she had received Mr. Le Frank's report; but she had not then recovered sufficiently to be able to read it through. She could now take it up again, and get to the end.

Other women might have been alarmed by the atrocious wickedness of the conspiracy which the music-master had planned. Mrs. Gallilee was only offended. That he should think her capable—in her social position—of favouring such a plot as he had suggested, was an insult which she was determined neither to forgive nor forget. She bitterly acknowledged to herself the disastrous weakness on her part which had trusted him. Now that she was a free agent again, she had her sufficient reason for dispensing with his further services. Fortunately, she had not committed herself in writing; he could produce no proof of the relations that had existed between them. It had been arranged that he should resume his music-lessons to the girls, as soon as he could feel sure that his presence in the lodging-house excited no suspicion of the purpose that had brought him there. Then would be the time to pay his expenses, and dismiss him.

In the mean while, the man's insolence had left its revolting impression on her mind. She felt the necessity of finding some agreeable occupation for her thoughts.

Look at your library table, learned lady; and see Modern Science, under all forms of public expression, ready and eager to interest you. There is scientific progress, in its present state of advancement, blowing its own trumpet; dead to all modest sense of mortal fallibility, in asserting its claims on the gratitude of mankind. There is scientific inquiry, in too great a hurry to let its results pass the test of experience, rushing into print to proclaim its own importance, and to declare any human being who ventures to doubt or differ a fanatic or a fool. There are the

leaders of public opinion, writing notices of professors, who have made discoveries not yet tried by time, not yet universally accepted even by their brethren, in terms which would be exaggerated if they were applied to Newton or to Bacon. There are lectures and addresses by dozens which, if they prove nothing else, prove that what was scientific knowledge some years since, is scientific ignorance now—and that what is scientific knowledge now, may be scientific ignorance in some years more. There, in magazines and reviews, are the controversies and discussions, in which Mr. Always Right and Mr. Never Wrong exhibit the natural tendency of man to believe in himself, in the most rampant stage of development that the world has yet seen. And there, last not least, is all that the gentle wisdom of FARADAY saw and deplored, when he said the words which should live for ever: ‘The first and last step in the education of the scientific judgment is—Humility.’

The library table was at Mrs. Gallilee’s side. She applied to it for interesting occupation, and gained her object within certain limits.

Unhappily for herself, she too had opened the wings of scientific discovery, and had contemplated blowing her own trumpet (with eulogistic echoes), in print. The professors, whose self-advertisements she was reading, failed in making themselves completely masters of her attention. Now and then, her thoughts wandered away sadly to the neglected frogs and tadpoles, in her own domestic laboratory. For how many days had those pets been deprived—perhaps at the critical moment of hatching—of her maternal care! Not a creature in the house understood the physico-chemical conditions of groups, the regulation of temperature and light, and the varieties of food which did, or did not, succeed in artificially transforming a tadpole into a frog. For all she knew to the contrary, the unguarded frogs might be wandering about the house; the tender tadpoles might be dead; their carefully prepared diet of freshwater weeds and coagulated albumen of eggs might be stinking. And to whom, in the first instance, were the disastrous events due which had produced these results? To Mrs. Gallilee’s detested niece!

‘\*\*\* Such, sir, is my friend’s discovery; opening up a new era in science, superseding all pre-conceived ideas, and promising advantages to humanity the scope of which it is simply impossible to calculate. Subscriptions to the testimonial by which we propose, in some small degree, to express our sense of obligation to this great man, may be paid to your obedient servant, —.’ Reaching this conclusion of a ‘letter to the Editor,’ Mrs. Gallilee took

another turn up and down the room, before she went on with her reading.

The sky had cleared again, after two days of rain. A golden gleam of sunlight drew her to the window. While she was still looking out, her husband appeared; leaving the house on foot, and carrying a large brown paper parcel under his arm.

With servants at his disposal, why was he carrying the parcel himself?

The time had been, when Mrs. Gallilee would have tapped at the window, and would have insisted on his instantly returning and answering that question. But his conduct, since the catastrophe in Carmina's room, had produced complete estrangement between the married pair. All his inquiries after his wife's health had been made by deputy. When he was not in the schoolroom with the children, he was at his club. Until he came to his senses, and made humble apology, no earthly consideration would induce Mrs. Gallilee to take the slightest notice of him.

She returned to her reading. The footman came in, with two letters; one arriving by post; the other having been dropped into the box by private messenger. Communications of this latter sort proceeded, not infrequently, from creditors. Mrs. Gallilee opened the stamped letter first.

It contained nothing more important than a few lines from a daily governess, whom she had engaged until a successor to Miss Minerva could be found. In obedience to Mrs. Gallilee's instructions, the governess would begin her attendance at ten o'clock on the next morning.

The second letter was of a very different kind. It related the disaster which had befallen Mr. Le Frank.

Mr. Null was the writer. As Miss Carmina's medical attendant, it was his duty to inform her guardian that her health had been unfavourably affected by an alarm in the house. Having described the nature of the alarm, he proceeded in these words: 'You will, I fear, lose the services of your present music-master. Inquiries made this morning at the hospital, and reported to me, appear to suggest serious results. The wounded man's constitution is in an unhealthy state; the surgeons are not sure of being able to save two of the fingers. I will do myself the honour of calling to-morrow before you go out for your drive.'

The impression produced by this intelligence on the lady to whom it was addressed, can only be reported in her own words. She—who knew, on the best possible authority, that the world had created itself—completely lost her head, and actually said, 'Thank God!'



For weeks to come—perhaps for months if the surgeon's forebodings were fulfilled—Mrs. Gallilee had got rid of Mr. Le Frank. In that moment of infinite relief, if her husband had presented himself, it is even possible that he might have been forgiven. As it was, he returned late in the afternoon; entered his own domain of the smoking-room, and left the house again five minutes afterwards. Joseph officiously opened the door for him; and Joseph was surprised, precisely as his mistress had been surprised. Mr. Gallilee had a large brown paper parcel under his arm—the second which he had taken out of the house with his own hands! Moreover, he looked excessively confused when the footman discovered him. That night, he was late in returning from the club. Joseph (now on the watch) observed that he was not steady on his legs—and drew his own conclusions accordingly.

Punctual to her time, on the next morning, the new governess arrived. Mrs. Gallilee received her, and sent for the children.

The maid in charge of them appeared alone. She had no doubt that the young ladies would be back directly. The master had taken them out for a little walk, before they began their lessons. He had been informed that the lady who had been appointed to teach them would arrive at ten o'clock. And what had he said? He had said, 'Very good.'

The half-hour struck—eleven o'clock struck—and neither the father nor the children returned. Ten minutes later, someone rang the door bell. The door being duly opened, nobody appeared on the house step. Joseph looked into the letter-box, and found a note addressed to his mistress, in his master's handwriting. He immediately delivered it. Hitherto, Mrs. Gallilee had only been anxious. Joseph, discreetly waiting for events outside the door, heard the bell rung furiously; and found his mistress in a passion. Not without reason—to do her justice. Mr. Gallilee's method of relieving his wife's anxiety was remarkable by its brevity. In one sentence, he assured her that there was no need to feel alarmed. In another, he mentioned that he had taken the girls away with him for change of air. And then he signed his initials—J. G.

Every servant in the house was summoned to the library, when Mrs. Gallilee had in some degree recovered herself.

One after another they were strictly examined; and one after another they had no evidence to give—excepting the maid who had been present when the master took the young ladies away. The little she had to tell, pointed to the inference that he had not admitted the girls to his confidence before they left the house. Maria had submitted, without appearing to be particularly pleased

at the prospect of so early a walk. Zo (never ready to exert either her intelligence or her legs) had openly declared that she would rather stay at home. To this the master had answered, 'Get your things on directly!'—and had said it so sharply that Miss Zoe stared at him in astonishment. Had they taken anything with them—a travelling bag for instance? They had taken nothing, except Mr. Gallilee's umbrella. Who had seen Mr. Gallilee last, on the previous night? Joseph had seen him last. The lower classes in England have one, and but one, true feeling of sympathy with the higher classes. The man above them appeals to their hearts, and merits their true service, when he is unsteady on his legs. Joseph nobly confined his evidence to what he had observed some hours previously: he mentioned the parcel. Mrs. Gallilee's keen perception, quickened by her own experience at the window, arrived at the truth. Those two bulky packages must have contained clothes—left, in anticipation of the journey, under the care of an accomplice. It was impossible that Mr. Gallilee could have got at the girls' dresses and linen, and have made the necessary selections from them, without a woman's assistance. The female servants were examined again. Each one of them positively asserted her innocence. Mrs. Gallilee threatened to send for the police. The indignant women all cried in chorus, 'Search our boxes!' Mrs. Gallilee took a wiser course. She sent to the lawyers who had been recommended to her by Mr. Null. The messenger had just been despatched, when Mr. Null himself, in performance of yesterday's engagement, called at the house.

He, too, was agitated. It was impossible that he could have heard what had happened. Was he the bearer of bad news? Mrs. Gallilee thought of Carmina first, and then of Mr. Le Frank.

'Prepare for a surprise,' Mr. Null began, 'a joyful surprise, Mrs. Gallilee! I have received a telegram from your son.'

He handed it to her as he spoke.

'September 6th. Arrived at Quebec, and received information of Carmina's illness. Sail to-morrow for Liverpool. Break the news gently to C. For God's sake send telegram to meet me at Queenstown.'

It was then the 7th of September. If all went well, Ovid would be in London in ten days more.

## CHAPTER LIV.

MRS. GALLILEE read the telegram—paused—and read it again. She let it drop on her lap; but her eyes still rested mechanically on the slip of paper. When she spoke, her voice startled Mr. Null. Usually loud and hard, her tones were strangely subdued. If his back had been turned towards her, he would hardly have known who was speaking to him.

‘I must ask you to make allowances for me,’ she began abruptly; ‘I hardly know what to say. This surprise comes at a time when I am badly prepared for it. I am getting well; but, you see, I am not quite so strong as I was before that woman attacked me. My husband has gone away—I don’t know where—and has taken my children with him. Read his note; but don’t say anything. You must let me be quiet, or I can’t think.’

She handed the letter to Mr. Null. He looked at her—read the few words submitted to him—and looked at her again. Who could have supposed that she would have been affected in this way, by the return of her son?

Mrs. Gallilee drew a long heavy breath. ‘I have got it now,’ she said—and turned to Mr. Null. ‘My son is coming home in a hurry, because of Carmina’s illness. Has Carmina written to him?’

‘Impossible, Mrs. Gallilee—in her present state of health.’

‘In her present state of health? I forgot that. There was something else? Oh, yes. Has Carmina seen the telegram?’

Mr. Null explained. He had just come from Carmina. In his medical capacity, he had thought it judicious to try the moral effect on his patient of a first allusion to the good news. He had only ventured to say that Mr. Ovid’s agents in Canada had heard from him on his travels, and had reason to believe that he would shortly return to Quebec. Upon the whole, the impression produced on the young lady—

It was useless to go on. Mrs. Gallilee was pursuing her own thoughts, without even a pretence of listening to him.

‘I want to know who wrote to my son,’ she persisted. ‘Was it the nurse?’

Mr. Null considered this to be in the last degree unlikely. The nurse’s language showed a hostile feeling towards Mr. Ovid, in consequence of his absence.

Mrs. Gallilee again repeated his last words. “In consequence of his absence.” Yes. Just so. I suppose I may keep the telegram?’

Prudent Mr. Null offered a copy—and made the copy, then and there. The original (he explained) was his authority for acting on Mr. Ovid's behalf, and he must therefore beg leave to keep it. Mrs. Gallilee permitted him to exchange the two papers. 'Is there anything more?' she asked. 'Your time is valuable, of course. Don't let me detain you.'

'May I feel your pulse before I go?' said Mr. Null.

She held out her arm to him in silence.

The carriage came to the door while he was counting the beat of the pulse. She glanced at the window, and said, 'Send it away.' Mr. Null remonstrated. 'My dear lady, the air will do you good.' She answered obstinately and quietly, 'No'—and once more became absorbed in thought. It had been her intention to combine her first day of carriage exercise with a visit to Teresa's lodgings, and a personal exertion of her authority. The news of Ovid's impending return made it a matter of serious importance to consider this resolution under a new light. She had now, not only to reckon with Teresa, but with her son. With this burden on her mind—already heavily laden by the sense of injury which her husband's flight had aroused—she had not even reserves enough of energy to spare for the trifling effort of dressing to go out. She broke into irritability, for the first time. 'I am trying to find out who has written to my son. How can I do it when you are worrying me about the carriage? Have you ever held a full glass in your hand, and been afraid of letting it overflow? That's what I'm afraid of—in my mind—I don't mean that my mind is a glass—I mean——' Her forehead turned red. 'Will you leave me?' she cried.

He left her instantly. The change in her manner, the difficulty she found in expressing her thoughts, had produced some uneasiness of feeling even in Mr. Null's mind.

In the hall, he spoke to Joseph. 'Do you know about your master and the children?' he said.

'Yes, sir.'

'I wish you had told me of it, when you let me in.'

'Have I done any harm, sir?'

'I don't know yet. If you want me, I shall be at home to dinner at seven.'

The next visitor was one of the partners in the legal firm, to which Mrs. Gallilee had applied for advice. After what Mr. Null had said, Joseph hesitated to conduct this gentleman into the presence of his mistress. He left the lawyer in the waiting-room, and took his card.

Mrs. Gallilee's attitude had not changed. She sat looking

down at the copied telegram and the letter from her husband, lying together on her lap. Joseph was obliged to speak twice, before he could rouse her.

‘To-morrow,’ was all she said.

‘What time shall I say, ma’am?’

She put her hand to her head—and broke into anger against Joseph. ‘Settle it yourself, you wretch!’ Her head drooped again over the papers. Joseph returned to the lawyer. ‘My mistress is not very well, sir. She will be obliged if you will call to-morrow, at your own time.’

About an hour later, she rang her bell—rang it unintermittingly, until Joseph appeared. ‘I’m famished,’ she said. ‘Something to eat! I never was so hungry in my life. At once—I can’t wait.’

The cook sent up a cold fowl, and a ham. Her eyes devoured the food, while the footman was carving it for her. Her bad temper seemed to have completely disappeared. She said, ‘What a delicious dinner! Just the very things I like.’ She lifted the first morsel to her mouth—and laid the fork down again with a weary sigh. ‘No: I can’t eat; what has come to me?’ With those words, she pushed her chair away from the table, and looked slowly all round her. ‘I want the telegram and the letter.’ Joseph found them. ‘Can *you* help me?’ she said. ‘I am trying to find out who wrote to my son. Say yes, or no, at once; I hate waiting.’

Joseph left her in her old posture, with her head down and the papers on her lap.

The appearance of the uneaten dinner in the kitchen produced a discussion, followed by a quarrel.

Joseph was of opinion that the mistress had got more upon her mind than her mind could well bear. It was useless to send for Mr. Null; he had already mentioned that he would not be at home until seven o’clock. There was no superior person in the house to consult. It was not for the servants to take responsibility on themselves. ‘Fetch the nearest doctor, and let *him* be answerable, if anything serious happens.’ Such was Joseph’s advice.

The women (angrily remembering that Mrs. Gallilee had spoken of sending for the police) ridiculed the footman’s cautious proposal—with one exception. When the others ironically asked him if he was not accustomed to the mistress’s temper yet, Mrs. Gallilee’s own servant (Jane) said, ‘What do *we* know about it? Joseph is the only one of us who has seen her, since the morning.’ This perfectly sensible remark had the effect of a

breath of wind on a smouldering fire. The female servants, all equally suspected of having assisted Mr. Gallilee in making up his parcels, were all equally assured that there was a traitress among them; the lady's maid being the suspected woman. Hitherto suppressed, this feeling now openly found its way to expression. Jane lost her temper; and betrayed herself as the guilty confederate.

'I'm a mean mongrel—am I?' cried the angry maid, repeating the cook's allusion to her birthplace in the Channel Islands. 'The mistress shall know, this minute, that I'm the woman who did it!'

'Why didn't you say so before?' the cook retorted.

'Because I promised my master not to tell on him, till he got to his journey's end.'

'Who'll lay a wager?' asked the cook. 'I bet half-a-crown she changes her mind, before she gets to the top of the stairs.'

'Perhaps she thinks the mistress will forgive her,' the parlour-maid suggested ironically.

'Or perhaps,' the housemaid added, 'she means to give the mistress notice to leave.'

'That's exactly what I'm going to do!' said Jane.

The women all declined to believe her. She appealed to Joseph. 'What did I tell you, when the mistress first sent me out in the carriage with poor Miss Carmina? Didn't I say that I was no spy, and that I wouldn't submit to be made one? I would have left the house—I would!—but for Miss Carmina's kindness. Any other young lady would have made me feel my mean position. *She* treated me like a friend—and I don't forget it. I'll go straight from this place, and help to nurse her!'

With that declaration, Jane left the kitchen.

Arrived at the library door, she paused. Not as the cook had suggested, to 'change her mind;' but to consider beforehand how much she should confess to her mistress, and how much she should hold in reserve.

Zo's narrative of what had happened, on the evening of Teresa's arrival, had produced its inevitable effect on the maid's mind. Strengthening, by the sympathy which it excited, her grateful attachment to Carmina, it had necessarily intensified her dislike of Mrs. Gallilee—and Mrs. Gallilee's innocent husband had profited by that circumstance! Jane had discovered her master, standing in a state of bewildered contemplation before the open wardrobe of his daughters, and had asked slyly if she could be of any use. Never remarkable for presence of mind in emergencies, Mr. Gallilee had helplessly admitted to his confidence the last person

in the house, whom anyone else (in his position) would have trusted. 'My good soul, I want to take the girls away quietly for change of air—you have got little secrets of your own, like me, haven't you?' There, he checked himself; conscious, when it was too late, that he was asking his wife's maid to help him in deceiving his wife. Jane's ready wit helped him through the difficulty. 'I understand, sir: you don't want my mistress to know of it.' Mr. Gallilee, at a loss for any other answer, instantly pulled out his purse. 'My mistress pays me, sir; I serve *you* for nothing.' In those words, she would have informed any other man of the place which Mrs. Gallilee held in her estimation. Her master simply considered her to be the most disinterested woman he had ever met with. If she lost her situation through helping him, he engaged to pay her wages until she found another place. The maid set his mind at rest on that subject. 'A woman who understands hairdressing as I do, sir, can refer to other ladies besides Mrs. Gallilee, and can get a place whenever she wants it.'

Having decided on what she should confess, and on what she should conceal, Jane knocked at the library door. Receiving no answer, she went in.

Mrs. Gallilee was leaning back in her chair: her hands hung down on either side of her: her eyes looked up drowsily at the ceiling. Prepared to see a person with an overburdened mind, the maid (without sympathy, to quicken her perceptions) saw nothing but a person on the point of taking a nap.

'Can I speak a word, ma'am?'

Mrs. Gallilee's eyes remained fixed on the ceiling. 'Is that my maid?' she asked.

Treated—to all appearance—with marked contempt, Jane no longer cared to assume the forms of respect either in language or manner. 'I wish to give you notice to leave,' she said abruptly; 'I find I can't get on with my fellow-servants.'

Mrs. Gallilee slowly raised her head, and looked at her maid—and said nothing.

'And while I'm about it,' the angry woman proceeded, 'I may as well own the truth. You suspect one of us of helping my master to take away the young ladies' things—I mean some few of their things. Well! you needn't blame innocent people. I'm the person.'

Mrs. Gallilee laid her head back again on the chair—and burst out laughing.

For one moment, Jane looked at her mistress in blank surprise.

Then the terrible truth burst on her. She ran into the hall, and called for Joseph.

He hurried up the stairs. The instant he presented himself at the open door, Mrs. Gallilee rose to her feet. 'My medical attendant,' she said, with an assumption of dignity; 'I must explain myself.' She held up one hand, outstretched; and counted her fingers with the other. 'First my husband. Then my son. Now my maid. One, two, three. Mr. Null, do you know the proverb? "It's the last hair that breaks the camel's back." ' She suddenly dropped on her knees. 'Will somebody pray for me?' she cried piteously. 'I don't know how to pray for myself. Where is God?'

Bareheaded as he was, Joseph ran out. The nearest doctor lived on the opposite side of the square. He happened to be at home. When he reached the house, the women servants were holding their mistress down by main force.

#### CHAPTER LV.

ON the next day, Mr. Mool—returning from a legal consultation to an appointment at his office—found a gentleman, whom he knew by sight, walking up and down before his door; apparently bent on intercepting him. 'Mr. Null, I believe?' he said, with his customary politeness.

Mr. Null answered to his name, and asked for a moment of Mr. Mool's time. Mr. Mool looked grave, and said he was late for an appointment already. Mr. Null admitted that the clerks in the office had told him so, and said at last, what he ought to have said at first: 'I am Mrs. Gallilee's medical attendant—there is serious necessity for communicating with her husband.'

Mr. Mool instantly led the way into the office.

The chief clerk approached his employer, with some severity of manner. 'The parties have been waiting, sir, for more than a quarter of an hour.' Mr. Mool's attention wandered: he was thinking of Mrs. Gallilee. 'Is she dying?' he asked. 'She is out of her mind,' Mr. Null answered. Those words petrified the lawyer: he looked helplessly at the clerk—who, in his turn, looked indignantly at the office clock. Mr. Mool recovered himself. 'Say I am detained by a most distressing circumstance; I will call on the parties later in the day, at their own hour.' Giving those directions to the clerk, he hurried Mr. Null upstairs into a private room. 'Tell me about it; pray tell me about it. Stop! Perhaps, there is not time enough. What can I do?'

Mr. Null put the question, which he ought to have asked when



they met at the house door. 'Can you tell me Mr. Gallilee's address?'

'Certainly! Care of the Earl of Northlake——'

'Will you please write it in my pocket-book? I am so upset by this dreadful affair that I can't trust my memory.'

Such a confession of helplessness as this, was all that was wanted to rouse Mr. Mool. He rejected the pocket-book, and wrote the address on a telegram. 'Return directly: your wife is seriously ill.' In five minutes more, the message was on its way to Scotland; and Mr. Null was at liberty to tell his melancholy story—if he could.

With assistance from Mr. Mool, he got through it. 'This morning,' he proceeded, 'I have had the two best opinions in London. Assuming that there is no hereditary taint, the doctors think favourably of Mrs. Gallilee's chances of recovery.'

'Is it violent madness?' Mr. Mool asked.

Mr. Null admitted that two nurses were required. 'The doctors don't look on her violence as a discouraging symptom,' he said. 'They are inclined to attribute it to the strength of her constitution. I felt it my duty to place my own knowledge of the case before them. Without mentioning painful family circumstances ——'

'I happen to be acquainted with the circumstances,' Mr. Mool interposed. 'Are they in any way connected with this dreadful state of things?'

He put that question eagerly, as if he had some strong personal interest in hearing the reply.

Mr. Null blundered on steadily with his story. 'I thought it right (with all due reserve) to mention that Mrs. Gallilee had been subjected to—I won't trouble you with medical language—let us say, to severe trial (mental and bodily trial), before her reason gave way.'

'And they considered that to be the cause ——?'

Mr. Null asserted his dignity. 'The doctors agreed with Me, that it had shaken her power of self-control.'

'You relieve me, Mr. Null—you infinitely relieve me! If our way of removing the children had done the mischief, I should never have forgiven myself.'

He blushed, and said no more. Had Mr. Null noticed the slip of the tongue into which his agitation had betrayed him? Mr. Null did certainly look as if he was going to put a question. The lawyer desperately forestalled him.

'May I ask how you came to apply to me for Mr. Gallilee's address? Did you think of it yourself?'

Mr. Null had never had an idea of his own, from the day of his birth, downward. 'A very intelligent man,' he answered, 'reminded me that you were an old friend of Mr. Gallilee. In short, it was Joseph—the footman at Fairfield Gardens.'

Joseph's good opinion was of no importance to Mr. Mool's professional interests. He could gratify Mr. Null's curiosity without fear of lowering himself in the estimation of a client.

'I had better, perhaps, explain that chance allusion of mine to the children,' he began. 'My good friend, Mr. Gallilee, had his own reasons for removing his daughters from home for a time—reasons, I am bound to add, in which I concur. The children were to be placed under the care of their aunt, Lady Northlake. Unfortunately, her ladyship was away with my lord, cruising in their yacht. They were not able to receive Maria and Zoe at once. In the interval that elapsed—you know our excellent friend?—Mr. Gallilee's resolution to make his authority felt (in plain words, to meet his wife's expected resistance) showed signs of failing him. I regret to say, that I suggested the—the sort of clandestine departure which did in fact take place. I also permitted some—in short, some of the necessary clothing to be privately deposited here, and called for on the way to the station. Very unprofessional, I am aware. I did it for the best; and allowed my friendly feeling to mislead me. Can I be of any further use? Mr. Ovid will hear dreadful news, when he comes home. Can't we prepare him for it, in any way?'

'He asks me to telegraph to him, at Queenstown.'

'Is there no friend who can meet him there? I have clients depending on me—cases, in which property is concerned, and reputation is at stake—or I would gladly go myself. You, with your patients, are as little at liberty as I am. Can't you think of some other friend?'

Mr. Null could think of nobody, and had nothing to propose. Of the three weak men, now brought into association by the influence of domestic calamity, he was the feeblest, beyond all doubt. Mr. Moel had knowledge of law, and could on occasion be incited to energy. Mr. Gallilee had warm affections, which, being stimulated, could at least assert themselves. Mr. Null, professionally and personally, was incapable of stepping beyond his own narrow limits, under any provocation whatever. He submitted to the force of events, as a cabbage-leaf submits to the teeth of a rabbit.

## CHAPTER LVI.

AFTER leaving the office, Mr. Null had his patients to see. He went to Carmina first. Since the unfortunate alarm in the house, he had begun to feel doubtful and anxious about her again.

In the sitting-room, he found Teresa and the landlady in consultation. In her own abrupt way, the nurse made him acquainted with the nature of the conference.

'We have two worries to bother us,' she said; 'and the music man is the worst of the two. There's a notion at the hospital (set agoing, I don't doubt, by the man himself), that I crushed his fingers on purpose. That's a lie! With the open cupboard door between us, how could I see him, or he see me? When I gave it a push-to, I no more knew where his hand was, than you do. If I meant anything, I meant to slap his face for prying about in my room. Here's our friend going to ask how he is, and willing to take my defence of myself along with her. We've made out a writing between us, to show to the doctors. Just look at it, and say if it's short enough to trouble nobody, and plain enough to tell the truth.'

Incapable Mr. Null showed sad ignorance of the first principles of criticism. He not only read the composition submitted to him from beginning to end, but expressed himself politely in speaking of the authors.

'Now about the other matter,' Teresa resumed. 'You tell me I shall fall ill myself, if I don't get a person to help me with Carmina. Well! the person has come.'

'Where is she?'

Teresa pointed to the bedroom.

'Recommended by me?' Mr. Null inquired.

'Recommended by herself. And we don't like her. That's the other worry.'

Mr. Null settled the question with a due regard to his own importance. 'No nurse has any business here, without my sanction! I'll send her away directly.'

He pushed open the baize door. A lady was sitting by Carmina's bedside. Even in the dim light, there was no mistaking *that* face. Mr. Null recognised—Miss Minerva.

She rose, and bowed to him. He returned the bow stiffly. Nature's protecting care of fools supplies them with an instinct which distrusts ability. Mr. Null had never liked Miss Minerva. At the same time, he was a little afraid of her. This was not the sort of nurse who could be ordered to retire at a moment's notice.

'I have been waiting anxiously to see you,' she said—and led the way to the farther end of the room. 'Carmina terrifies me,' she added in a whisper. 'I have been here for an hour. When I entered the room her face, poor dear, seemed to come to life again; she was able to express her joy at seeing me. Even the jealous old nurse noticed the change for the better. Why didn't it last? Look at her—oh, look at her!'

The melancholy relapse that had followed the short interval of excitement was visible to anyone now.

There was the 'simulated paralysis' showing itself plainly in every part of the face. She lay still as death, looking vacantly at the foot of the bed. Mr. Null was inclined to resent the interference of a meddling woman, in the discharge of his duty. He felt Carmina's pulse, in sulkily silence. Her eyes never moved; her hand showed no consciousness of his touch. Teresa opened the door, and looked in—impatiently eager to see the intruding nurse sent away. Miss Minerva invited her to return to her place at the bedside. 'I only ask to occupy it,' she said considerately, 'when you want rest.' Teresa was ready with an ungracious reply, but found no opportunity of putting it into words. Miss Minerva turned quickly to Mr. Null. 'I must ask you to let me say a few words more,' she continued; 'I will wait for you in the sitting-room.'

Her look reminded him of his experience, on certain past occasions. She was only a woman; but there was a resolution in her that no resistance could shake. He followed her into the sitting-room, and waited in sullen submission to hear what she had to say.

'I must not trouble you by entering into my own affairs,' she began. 'I will only say that I have obtained an engagement much sooner than I had anticipated, and that the convenience of my employers made it necessary for me to meet them in Paris. I owed Carmina a letter; but I had reasons for not writing until I knew whether she had, or had not, left London. With that object, I called this morning at her aunt's house. You now see me here—after what I have heard from the servants. I make no comment, and I ask for no explanations. One thing only, I must know. Teresa refers me to you. Is Carmina attended by any other medical man?'

Mr. Null answered stiffly, 'I am in consultation with Doctor Benjulia; and I expect him to-day.'

The reply startled her. 'Dr. Benjulia?' she repeated.

'The greatest man we have!' Mr. Null asserted in his most positive manner.

She silently determined to wait until Doctor Benjulia arrived.

'What is the last news of Mr. Ovid?' she said to him, after an interval of consideration.

He told her the news, in the fewest words possible. Even he observed that it seemed to excite her.

'Oh, Mr. Null! who is to prepare him for what he will see in that room? Who is to tell him what he must hear of his mother?'

Mr. Null stood on his dignity. 'The matter is left in my hands,' he announced. 'I shall telegraph to him at Queenstown.'

The obstinate insensibility of his tone stopped her on the point of saying, what Mr. Mool had said already. She, too, felt for Ovid, when she thought of the cruel brevity of a telegram. 'At what date will the vessel reach Queenstown?' she asked.

'By way of making sure,' said Mr. Null, 'I shall telegraph in eight days' time.'

She troubled him with no more inquiries. He had purposely remained standing, in the expectation that she would take the hint, and go; and he now walked to the window, and looked out. She remained in her chair, thinking. In a few minutes more, there was a heavy step on the stairs. Benjulia had arrived.

He looked hard at Miss Minerva, in unconcealed surprise at finding her in the house. She rose, and made an effort to propitiate him by shaking hands. 'I am very anxious,' she said gently, 'to hear your opinion.'

'Your hand tells me that,' he answered. 'It's a cold hand, on a warm day. You're an excitable woman.'

He looked at Mr. Null, and led the way into the bedroom.

Left by herself, Miss Minerva discovered writing materials (placed ready for Mr. Null's next prescription) on a side table. She made use of them at once to write to her employer. 'A dear friend of mine is seriously ill, and in urgent need of all that my devotion can do for her. If you are willing to release me from my duties for a short time, your sympathy and indulgence will not be thrown away on an ungrateful woman. If you cannot do me this favour, I ask your pardon for putting you to inconvenience, and leave some other person, whose mind is at ease, to occupy the place which I am for the present unfit to fill.' Having completed her letter in those terms, she waited Benjulia's return.

There was sadness in her face, but no agitation, as she looked patiently towards the bedroom door. At last, in her inmost heart, she knew it—the victory over herself was a victory won. Carmina could trust her now; and Ovid himself should see it!

Mr. Null returned to the sitting-room alone. Doctor Benjulia

had no time to spare: he had left the bedroom by the other door.

‘I may say (as you seem anxious) that my colleague approves of every suggestion that I have made; we recognise the new symptoms, without feeling alarm.’ Having issued this bulletin, Mr. Null sat down to write his prescription.

When he looked up again, the room was empty. Had she left the house? No: her travelling hat and her gloves were on the other table. Had she boldly confronted Teresa on her own ground? He took his prescription into the bedroom. There she was, and there sat the implacable nurse, already persuaded into listening to her! What conceivable subject could there be, which offered two such women neutral ground to meet on? Mr. Null left the house without the faintest suspicion that Carmina might be the subject.

‘May I try to rouse her?’

Teresa answered by silently resigning her place at the bedside. Miss Minerva touched Carmina’s hand, and spoke. ‘Have you heard the good news, dear? Ovid is coming back in little more than a week.’

Carmina looked—reluctantly looked—at her friend. She said, with an effort, ‘I am glad.’

‘You will be better,’ Miss Minerva continued, ‘the moment you see him.’

Her face became faintly animated. ‘I shall be able to say good-bye,’ she answered.

‘Not good-bye, darling. He is returning to you after a long journey.’

‘I am going, Frances, on a longer journey still.’ She closed her eyes, too weary or too indifferent to say more.

Miss Minerva drew back, desperately struggling against the tears that fell fast over her face. The jealous old nurse quietly moved nearer to her, and kissed her hand. ‘I’ve been a brute and a fool,’ said Teresa; ‘You’re almost as fond of her as I am.’

A week later, Miss Minerva left London, to wait for Ovid at Queenstown.

## CHAPTER LVII.

MR. MOOL was waiting at Fairfield Gardens, when his old friend arrived from Scotland, to tell him what the cautiously expressed message in the telegram really meant. But one idea seemed to be impressed on Mr. Gallilee's mind—the idea of reconciliation. He insisted on seeing his wife. It was in vain to tell him that she was utterly incapable of reciprocating or even of understanding his wishes. Absolute resistance was the one alternative left—and it was followed by distressing results. The kind-hearted old man burst into a fit of crying, which even shook the resolution of the doctors. One of them went upstairs to warn the nurses. The other said, 'Let him see her.'

The instant he showed himself in the room, Mrs. Gallilee recognised him with a shriek of fury. The nurses held her back—while Mr. Mool dragged him out again, and shut the door. The object of the doctors had been gained. His own eyes had convinced him of the terrible necessity of placing his wife under restraint. With his consent she was removed to a private asylum.

Maria and Zo had been left in Scotland—as perfectly happy as girls could be, in the society of their cousins, and under the affectionate care of their aunt. Mr. Gallilee remained in London; but he was not left alone in the deserted house. The good lawyer had a spare room at his disposal; and Mrs. Mool and her daughters received him with true sympathy. Coming events helped to steady his mind. He was comforted in the anticipation of Ovid's return, and interested in hearing of the generous motive which had led Miss Minerva to meet his stepson. 'I never agreed with the others when they used to abuse our governess,' he said. 'She might have been quick tempered, and she might have been ugly—I suppose I saw her in some other light, myself.' He had truly seen her under another light. In his simple affectionate nature, there had been instinctive recognition of that great heart.

He was allowed to see Carmina, in the hope that pleasant associations connected with him might have a favourable influence. She smiled faintly, and gave him her hand, when she saw him at the bedside—but that was all.

He was too deeply distressed to ask to see her again. Day by day, he made his inquiries at the door; and day by day the answer was always the same.

Before she left London, Miss Minerva had taken it on herself to engage the vacant rooms, on the ground floor of the lodging-house, for Ovid. She knew his heart, as she knew her own heart.

Once under the same roof with Carmina, he would leave it no more—until life gave her back to him, or death took her away. Hearing of what had been done, Mr. Gallilee removed to Ovid's rooms the writing-desk and the books, the favourite music and the faded flowers left by Carmina at Fairfield Gardens. 'Anything that belongs to her,' he thought, 'will surely be welcome to the poor fellow when he comes back.'

On one afternoon—never afterwards to be forgotten—he had only begun to make his daily inquiry, when the door on the ground floor was opened, and Miss Minerva beckoned to him.

Her face daunted Mr. Gallilee: he asked, in a whisper, if Ovid had returned.

She pointed upwards, and answered, 'He is with her now.'

'How did he bear it?'

'We don't know; we were afraid to follow him into the room.'

She turned towards the window as she spoke. Teresa was sitting there—vacantly looking out. Mr. Gallilee spoke to her kindly: she made no answer; she never even moved. 'Worn out!' Miss Minerva whispered to him. 'When she thinks of Carmina now, she thinks without hope.'

He shuddered. The expression of his own fear was in those words—and he shrank from it. Miss Minerva took his hand, and led him to a chair. 'Ovid will know best,' she reminded him; 'let us wait for what Ovid will say.'

'Did you meet him on board the vessel?' Mr. Gallilee asked.

'Yes.'

'How did he look?'

'So well and so strong that you would hardly have known him again.'

'Was he frightened about Carmina?'

'Don't speak of it! I had courage enough to tell him the truth, but not courage enough to look at him.'

'You good creature—you dear good creature! Forgive me if I have distressed you; I didn't mean it.'

'You have not distressed me, Mr. Gallilee. Is there anything more I can tell you?'

Mr. Gallilee hesitated. 'I don't like to speak of it,' he said; 'but there is one thing more. Did you tell him what had happened——?'

He hesitated again. Miss Minerva understood the imperfectly expressed question. 'Yes,' she answered; 'I spoke to him of his mother, first.'

'Why?'

'I thought he might be more ready to judge her mercifully,



when we returned to the subject of Carmina. I mean, when I could no longer avoid——’

Mr. Gallilee stopped her. ‘Don’t tell me what you mean!’ He said with a look of horror. ‘I would give everything I possess in the world, if I could forget it. What did Ovid say?’

‘In mercy to his mother, he spared me—as you have spared me. He said, “Let it be enough for me to know that she was the person to blame. I was prepared to hear it when I read Zo’s letter: my mother’s silence could only be accounted for in one way.”—Don’t you know, Mr. Gallilee, that the child wrote to Ovid?’

The surprise and delight of Zo’s fond old father, when he heard the story of the letter, forced a smile from Miss Minerva, even at that time of doubt and sorrow. He declared that he would have returned to his daughter by the mail train of that night, but for two considerations. He must see his stepson before he went back to Scotland; and he must search all the toy-shops in London for the most magnificent present that could be offered to a young person of ten years old. ‘Tell Ovid, with my love, I’ll call again to-morrow,’ he said, looking at his watch. ‘I have just time to write to Zo by to-day’s post.’ He went to his club, for the first time since he had returned to London. Miss Minerva thought of the old times, and wondered if he would enjoy his champagne.

A little later Mr. Null called—anxious to know if Ovid had arrived.

Other women, in the position of Miss Minerva and Teresa, might have hesitated to keep the patient’s room closed to the doctor. These two were resolved. They refused to disturb Ovid, even by sending up a message. Mr. Null took offence. ‘Understand, both of you,’ he said, ‘when I call to-morrow morning, I shall insist on going upstairs—and if I find this incivility repeated, I shall throw up the case.’ He left the room, triumphing in his fool’s paradise of aggressive self-conceit.

They waited for some time longer—and still no message reached them from upstairs. ‘We may be wrong in staying here,’ Miss Minerva suggested; ‘he may want to be alone when he leaves her—let us go.’

She rose to return to the house of her new employers. They respected her, and felt for her: while Carmina’s illness continued she had the entire disposal of her time. The nurse accompanied her to the door; resigned to take refuge in the landlady’s room. ‘I’m afraid to be by myself,’ Teresa said. ‘Even that woman’s chatter is better for me than my own thoughts.’

Before parting for the night they waited in the hall, looking towards the stairs, and listening anxiously. Not a sound reached their ears.

## CHAPTER LVIII.

AMONG many vain hopes, one had been realised : they had met again.

In the darkened room, her weary eyes could hardly have seen the betrayal of what he suffered—even if she had looked up in his face. She was content to see him sitting by her ; to rest her head on his breast, to feel his arm round her. ‘I am glad, dear,’ she said, ‘to have lived long enough for this.’

Those were her first words—after the first kiss. She had trembled and sighed, when he ran to her and bent over her : it was the one expression left of all her joy and all her love. But it passed away as other lesser agitations had passed away. One last reserve of energy rallied under the gentle persuasion of love. Silent towards all other friends, she was able to speak to Ovid.

‘You used to breathe so lightly,’ she said. ‘How is it that I hear you now ? Oh, Ovid, don’t cry ! I couldn’t bear that.’

He answered her quietly. ‘Don’t be afraid, darling ; I won’t distress you.’

‘And you will let me say, what I want to say ?’

‘Oh yes !’

This satisfied her. ‘I may rest a little now,’ she said.

He too was silent ; held down by the heavy hand of despair.

The time had been, in the days of his failing health, when the solemn shadows of evening falling over the fields—the soaring song of the lark in the bright heights of the midday sky—the dear lost remembrances that the divine touch of music finds again—brought tears into his eyes. They were dry eyes now ! Those once tremulous nerves had gathered steady strength on the broad prairies and in the roving life. What sympathies that melt into tears throbbed in the new vitality that rioted in his blood, whether she lived or whether she died ? In those deep breathings that had alarmed her, she had indeed heard the vain struggle of grief to find its way to the lost sources of tears, through the health and strength that set moral weakness at defiance. Nature had remade this man—and Nature never pities.

It was an effort to her to collect her thoughts—but she did collect them. She was able to tell him what was in her mind.

‘Do you think, Ovid, your mother will care much what becomes of me, when I die ?’

He started at those dreadful words—so softly, so patiently spoken. ‘You will live,’ he said. ‘My Carmina, what am I here for but to bring you back to life ?’

She made no attempt to dispute with him. Quietly, persistently, she returned to the thought that was in her.

‘Say that I forgive your mother, Ovid—and that I only ask one thing in return. I ask her to leave me to you, when the end has come. My dear, there is a feeling in me that I can’t get over. Don’t let me be buried in a great place all crowded with the dead! I once saw a picture—it was at home in Italy, I think—an English picture of a quiet little churchyard in the country. The shadows of the trees rested on the lonely graves. And some great poet had written—oh, such beautiful words about it. *The redbreast loves to build and warble there, And little footsteps lightly print the ground.* Promise, Ovid, you will take me to some place like that!’

He promised—and she thanked him, and rested again.

‘There was something else,’ she said, when the interval had passed. ‘My head is so sleepy. I wonder whether I can think of it?’

After a while she did think of it.

‘I want to make you a little farewell present. Will you undo my gold chain? Don’t cry, Ovid! oh, don’t cry!’

He obeyed her. The gold chain held the two locket—the treasured portraits of her father and her mother. ‘Wear them for my sake,’ she murmured. ‘Lift me up; I want to put them round your neck myself.’ She tried, vainly tried, to clasp the chain. Her head fell back on his breast. ‘Too sleepy,’ she said; ‘always too sleepy now! Say you love me, Ovid.’

He said it.

‘Kiss me, dear.’

He kissed her.

‘Now lay me down on the pillow. I’m not eighteen yet—and I feel as old as eighty! Rest; all I want is rest.’ Looking at him fondly, her eyes closed little by little—then softly opened again. ‘Don’t wait in this dull room, darling; I will send for you, if I wake.’

It was the only wish of hers that he disobeyed. From time to time, his fingers touched her pulse, and felt its feeble beat. From time to time, he stooped and let the faint coming and going of her breath flutter on his cheek. The twilight fell, and darkness began to gather over the room. Still, he kept his place by her, like a man entranced.

## CHAPTER LIX.

THE first trivial sound that broke the spell, was the sound of a match struck in the next room.

He rose, and groped his way to the door. Teresa had ventured upstairs, and had kindled a light. Some momentary doubt of him kept her silent when he looked at her. He stammered and stared about him confusedly, when he spoke.

‘Where—where—?’ He seemed to have lost his hold on his thoughts—he gave it up, and tried again. ‘I want to be alone,’ he burst out; recovering, for the moment, some power of expressing himself.

Teresa took him by the hand like a child. She led him downstairs to his rooms. He stood silently watching her, while she lit the candles. ‘Is there anything I can do for you?’ she ventured to ask. He shook his head vacantly. She found courage in her pity for him. ‘Try to pray,’ she said, as she left the room.

He fell on his knees; but still the words failed him. He tried to quiet his mind by holy thoughts. No! The dumb agony in him was powerless to find relief. Only the shadows of thoughts crossed his mind; his eyes ached with a burning heat. He began to be afraid of himself. The active habits of the life that he had left, drove him out, with the instincts of an animal, into space and air. Neither knowing nor caring in what direction he turned his steps, he walked on at the top of his speed. On and on, till the crowded houses began to grow more rare—till there were gaps of open ground, on either side of him—till the moon rose behind a plantation of trees, and bathed in its melancholy light a lonely high road. He followed the road till he was tired of it, and turned aside into a winding lane. The lights and shadows, alternating with each other, soothed and pleased him. He had got the relief in exercise that had been denied him while he was in repose. He could think again; he could feel the resolution stirring in him to save that dear one, or to die with her. Now, at last, he was man enough to face the terrible necessity that confronted him, and fight the battle of Art and Love against Death. Time—he knew it now—time was precious: the speediest way back to her was the best way. He stopped in the lane, and looked round. In the solitude, there was no hope of finding a person to direct him. He turned, to go back to the high road.

At the same moment, he became conscious of the odour of tobacco wafted towards him on the calm night air. Some one was smoking in the lane.

He retraced his steps, until he reached a gate—with a barren field behind it. There was the man, whose tobacco smoke he had smelt, leaning on the gate, with his pipe in his mouth.

The moonlight fell full on Ovid's face, as he approached to ask his way. The man suddenly stood up—stared at him—and said, 'Hullo! is it you or your ghost?'

His face was in shadow, but his voice answered for him. The man was Benjulia.

'Have you come to see me?' he asked.

'No.'

'Won't you shake hands?'

'No.'

'What's wrong?'

Ovid had heard from Miss Minerva, all that Teresa could tell of the consultations between Benjulia and Mr. Null, and all that she had herself observed when Benjulia had come to the house. He answered, when he had steadied his temper.

'I have seen Carmina,' he said.

Benjulia went on with his smoking. 'An interesting case, isn't it?' he remarked.

'You were called into consultation by Mr. Null,' Ovid continued; 'and you approved of his ignorant treatment—you, who knew better.'

'I should think I did!' Benjulia rejoined.

'You deliberately encouraged an incompetent man; you let that poor girl go on from bad to worse—for some vile end of your own.'

Benjulia good-naturedly corrected him. 'No, no. For an excellent end—for knowledge.'

'If I fail to remedy the mischief, which is your doing, and yours alone——'

Benjulia took his pipe out of his mouth. 'How do you mean to cure her?' he eagerly interposed. 'Have you got a new idea?'

'If I fail,' Ovid repeated, 'her death lies at your door. You merciless villain—as certainly as that moon is now shining over us, your life shall answer for hers.'

Astonishment—immeasurable astonishment—sealed Benjulia's lips. He looked down the lane when Ovid left him, completely stupefied. The one imaginable way of accounting for such language as he had heard—spoken by a competent member of his own profession!—presented the old familiar alternative. 'Drunk or mad?' he wondered while he lit his pipe again. Walking back to the house, his old distrust of Ovid troubled him once

more. He decided to call at Teresa's lodgings in a day or two, and ascertain from the landlady (and the chemist) how Carmina was being cured.

Returning to the high road, Ovid was passed by a tradesman, driving his cart towards London. The man civilly offered to take him as far as the nearest outlying cabstand.

Neither the landlady nor Teresa had gone to their beds when he returned. Their account of Carmina, during his absence, contained nothing to alarm him. He bade them good-night—eager to be left alone in his room.

In the house and out of the house, there was now the perfect silence that helps a man to think. His mind was clear; his memory answered, when he called on it to review that part of his own medical practice which might help him, by experience, in his present need. But he shrank—with Carmina's life in his hands—from trusting wholly to himself. A higher authority than his was waiting to be consulted. He took from his portmanteau the manuscript presented to him by the poor wretch whose last hours he had soothed, in the garret at Montreal.

The work opened with a declaration which gave it a special value, in Ovid's estimation.

'If this imperfect record of experience is ever read by other eyes than mine, I wish to make one plain statement at the outset. The information which is presented in these pages is wholly derived from the results of bedside practice; pursued under miserable obstacles and interruptions, and spread over a period of many years. Whatever faults and failings I may have been guilty of as a man, I am innocent, in my professional capacity, of ever having perpetrated the useless and detestable cruelties which go by the name of Vivisection. Without entering into any of the disputes on either side, which this practice has provoked, I declare my conviction that no asserted usefulness in the end, can justify deliberate cruelty in the means. The man who asserts that any pursuit in which he can engage is independent of moral restraint, is a man in a state of revolt against God. I refuse to hear him in his own defence, on that ground.'

Ovid turned next to the section of the work which was entitled 'Brain Disease.' The writer introduced his observations in these prefatory words:

'A celebrated physiologist, plainly avowing the ignorance of doctors in the matter of the brain and its diseases, and alluding to appearances presented by post-mortem examinations, concludes his confession thus: "We cannot even be sure whether many of

the changes discovered are the cause or the result of the disease, or whether the two are the conjoint results of a common cause."

'So this man writes, after experience in Vivisection. Let my different experience be heard next. Not knowing into what hands this manuscript may fall, or what unexpected opportunities of usefulness it may encounter after my death, I purposely abstain from using technical language in the statement which I have now to make.

'In medical investigations, as in all other forms of human inquiry, the result in view is not infrequently obtained by indirect and unexpected means. What I have to say here on the subject of brain disease, was first suggested by experience of two cases, which seemed in the last degree unlikely to help me. They were both cases of young women; each one having been hysterically affected by a serious moral shock; terminating, after a longer or shorter interval, in simulated paralysis. One of these cases I treated successfully. While I was still in attendance on the other, (pursuing the same course of treatment which events had already proved to be right), a fatal accident terminated my patient's life, and rendered a post-mortem examination necessary. From those starting points, I arrived—by devious ways which I am now to relate—at deductions and discoveries that threw a new light on the nature and treatment of brain disease.'

Hour by hour, Ovid studied the pages that followed, until his mind and the mind of the writer were one. He then returned to certain preliminary allusions to the medical treatment of the two girls—inexpressibly precious to him, in Carmina's present interests. The dawn of day found him prepared at all points, and only waiting until the lapse of the next few hours placed the means of action in his hands.

But there was one anxiety still to be relieved, before he lay down to rest awhile.

He took off his shoes, and stole upstairs to Carmina's door. The faithful Teresa was astir, earnestly persuading her to take some light nourishment. The little that he could hear of her voice, as she answered, made his heart ache—it was so faint and so low. Still she could speak; and still there was the old saying to remember, which has comforted so many and deceived so many: While there's life, there's hope.

*(To be concluded.)*

## The Old Melo-drama.

How well I can recall the effects produced upon my boyish imagination by the performance of an old melo-drama!—how breathlessly I watched the assassins with their long daggers, and short swords, and gigantic pistols, creeping about the stage, to pizzicato music, in search of the good young man of the story, who was concealed behind a tree or a piece of ruin, but who would so recklessly expose himself to indulge in brief commentaries upon their movements; what terrible suspense I endured when the pale weird woman with the black hair, who passed all her life in moaning and cursing over some mysterious wrong, was attempting, to the tremulous wailings of the violins, the escape of the lovely captive from the robber's den; and how I could scarcely suppress a cry when the robber himself, all boots, buttons and pistols, suddenly barred their way! Then the great combat at the end, to the shrieking of fiddles, the blare of cornets, and the beating of drums, wherein the good young man fought two and sometimes three ruffians, and, although nearly overpowered more than once, ultimately succeeded in laying their black wigs low; then there was the rush on of the lovely captive, red fire and the apotheosis of virtue trampling upon vice. Very frequently there was a ghost, who appeared at opportune moments in lambent flames of blue fire, much to the terror of all the villains, and to the gratification of all the good people.

The old melo-drama was strictly conventional; the robbers always wore dirty boots of untanned leather, jackets with many short tails and adorned with many buttons; long black hair and beards of burnt cork. It would be a curious ethnological inquiry to inquire into the origin of the old dramatic idea that wickedness is confined to black-haired people; since Lady Audley, however, there has been a run on red. There was no casuistry about the old melo-drama, no paltering with sin; vice and virtue were divided by impassable lines; trimming was impossible; you must be one thing or the other; poetical justice was always rigidly enforced, the triumph of wickedness was unknown in that world, and how anybody could be wicked when they knew that a terrible doom would inevitably overtake them, or how anybody could think of being otherwise than immaculately virtuous when they were so well rewarded for it, was one of those problems that could be referred only to the perversity of human nature.

The name melo-drama, which signifies a play interspersed with



vocal and instrumental music, was first applied by the Italians to what we now call opera, and between the earliest operas and the earliest melo-dramas there is a great resemblance; both took romantic and improbable stories for their plots, and the characters of both, in the most trying situations, would relieve their feelings by songs, duets, and concerted pieces. In the course of time the vocal introductions became fewer and fewer, until these were dispensed with altogether, and instrumental music alone was used to emphasise the action. The two earliest melo-dramas in the English language, 'A Tale of Mystery,' and 'Deaf and Dumb,' were written by the author of the 'Road to Ruin,' Thomas Holcroft; each has a dumb character and much of the action is carried on in pantomime; barons of the blackest dye of infamy, terrible assassins, virtuous and hospitable peasants, persecuted innocents, roaring torrents, thunder and lightning are the ingredients of these highly-flavoured stage dishes. Both were produced at the patent theatres and obtained such signal success that this species of dramatic composition became all the rage, and nearly every playwright of the day turned his attention to it.

But it was the age of melo-drama; we had just been flooded with the grim and ghostly literature of Germany, and there was an insatiable appetite among the public for haunted castles, tyrant barons, mysterious freebooters. Scott was translating German ballads, Mrs. Radcliffe and her imitators were pouring forth copious streams of horror, and the stage, as usual, was by no means backward in following the public taste. And after all, it was but a natural reaction from the frigid, arid, lifeless, blank-verse tragedies, with their interminable speeches and utter lack of interest, with which generations of playgoers had been bored or entertained. Let anyone buy a volume of these off one of the old book-stalls, where they still abound, and try to read a few pages, and he will then understand the eagerness with which a long-suffering public hailed any change which promised life, excitement, action, and which superseded the dreary classical stories—as rendered by eighteenth century dramatists—upon which every play-writer considered it his duty to try his prentice hand.

Although Holcroft's two works preceded his attempts in the same line by several years, Matthew Gregory Lewis, the author of the once famous romance of 'The Monk,' was really the originator of the old melo-drama. 'The Castle Spectre,' produced at Drury Lane in 1797, crowded the theatre for sixty nights, a most marvellous run for those days, and was interpreted by some of the best actors of the period—John Kemble, Wroughton, Palmer,

Bannister, Dowton, Mrs. Jordan being included in the cast. Spectres of the blue-fire school were then untried experiments in stage effect, and Sheridan, who was the manager at the time, was exceedingly dubious as to the reception the public might accord the ghost of the murdered Evelina, and tried very hard to induce the author to suppress it; but Lewis was obstinate, and the result justified his obstinacy; the ghost walked in her flame of blue fire, the audience were awe-inspired and delighted, and an apparition of some kind was considered henceforth essential to every romantic play. Earl Osmond became the type of conscience-haunted tyrants, of usurpers burdened with some awful secret and nightly pursued by the Nemesis of bad dreams, but whose chief pleasure during the day seemed to consist in ordering virtuous but abusive young men to be confined in dungeons beneath the castle moat; here also, in the person of Earl Reginald, we have the progenitor of many scores of captive fathers who have spent countless years, living, it would appear, like Othello's toad, 'upon the vapours of a dungeon,' and likewise many other conventional lay figures that linger in the minds of old playgoers. The language of 'The Castle Spectre' is not so stilted as that of many of its successors; although written in that peculiar sentimental, vapid diction which obtained at the period, it is singularly bald and unmodulated prose. It is remarkable, perhaps, as containing one of the first protests against slavery heard upon the stage; the speech is put into the mouth of Hassan, one of the black myrmidons of Earl Osmond, and is a very favourable specimen of the style of the play:—

'I have been dragged from my native land, from a wife who was everything to me, to whom I was everything! Twenty years have elapsed since these Christians tore me away; they trampled upon my heart, mocked my despair, and when in frantic terms I raved of Samba, laughed, and wondered how a negro's soul could feel! In that moment, when the last point of Africa faded from my view, when, as I stood on the vessel's deck, I felt that all I loved was to me lost for ever, in that bitter moment did I banish humanity from my heart. I tore from my arm the bracelet of Samba's hair; I gave to the sea the precious token, and while the high waves swiftly bore it from me, vowed, aloud, endless hatred to mankind. I have kept my oath, *I will keep it.*' Some time ago 'The Castle Spectre' was revived at one of the West End theatres in order to cast ridicule upon the plays of a past generation. It would have been about as logical to have given 'Macbeth Travestie' as a specimen of Shakespeare. To understand the effect produced upon our ancestors by such representations we should

have to reproduce all the conditions under which they witnessed them, an almost impossible undertaking—we must have the highfalutin exaggerated style of acting which the language demanded, actors especially trained to deliver it, and, above all, an audience to whom they could seriously appeal. Fifty years hence, when the dramatic style has entirely changed, some manager may revive a favourite drama of the present day, which will certainly appear equally ludicrous to our grandchildren.

Another famous melo-drama written by Lewis, was 'Rugantino,' founded upon his own romance of 'The Bravo of Venice;' which was taken from a German source, as, indeed, was the case more or less with all these productions. Does any reader remember that extraordinary spectral drama, 'Raymond and Agnes, or the Bleeding Nun of Lindenberg,' founded upon an episode in 'The Monk'? A most astounding piece of diablerie, banditti, and creepiness. It is not so many years ago since it was played at the 'Haymarket' as an after-piece. Then there was 'One o'Clock, or the Knight and the Wood Demon,' also by Lewis. Only think of the title, and the expectations it would excite among an audience that delighted in horrors. This work by its numerous vocal pieces, choruses, songs, duets, fully justified the term melo-drama: I can remember it being a stock play in good provincial theatres.

We should scarcely suspect the author of 'Gilbert Gurney' and the 'Berners Street Hoax,' of being an imitator of Matthew Lewis, yet he was the author of two melo-dramas, one of which, 'Tekeli,' was very famous in its day, famous for its processions and 'terrific' combats; the elder Hook composed some very tune-ful music for it.

One's theatrical recollections need not go very far back to remember 'The Miller and his Men,' and O'Keefe's 'Castle of Andalusia' at the Haymarket; only a few years before his death Buckstone took the latter for his benefit; both were essentially operatic, and the beautiful music composed by Bishop for the former piece is not likely to be forgotten. The round 'When the Wind Blows,' and the sextette 'Stay, Prithee Stay,' are among that composer's most charming compositions; the blowing up of the windmill and the bandit millers was considered a great stage effect at the beginning of the present century, and probably excited as much wonder and admiration among our grandfathers as did the cave scene of the 'Colleen Bawn,' or the fire scene of the 'Streets of London,' among their descendants, a few years back. It was melo-drama that first brought in elaborate stage effects and gorgeous accessories, and during the so-called palmy days of the

Kembles, while a few pairs of dingy 'flats,' and a collection of dingy dresses that had done service for a generation, were considered good enough for 'Hamlet' and 'Macbeth,' the managers of the great theatres lavished large sums upon real water, elephants, horses, supers, gorgeous scenery and dresses to illustrate such productions as 'Timour the Tartar,' the 'Cataract of the Ganges,' 'Aladdin'—not the burlesque, but a veritable, serious drama—and turned the stage into the platform of a menagerie; and the classical houses were crowded to witness absurdities that a Whitechapel costermonger would not tolerate now-a-days. As an instance, we may quote the combat to music, in a drama entitled the 'Dumb Maid of Genoa;' in this the combatants, each armed with a short, blunt, basket-hilted sword, timed every blow with the orchestra. Sometimes each note had its corresponding clash, at others the combatants had to rest their 'minim rest,' and engage only upon the beat of the bar. To see them chop at one another in what was technically called 'the round eights,' aiming and parrying blows while turning pirouettes, and performing other fantastic movements, and stabbing one another to strong 'chords,' was to see a thing beyond the power even of burlesque to travesty.

As the minor theatres arose, melo-drama received a new impetus. Previous to the repeal of the Licensing Act of 1737, the two patent theatres in the winter, and the Haymarket in the summer, had the monopoly of what was called the legitimate drama, and the new houses could perform only such pieces as came under the designation of 'Burlettas;' by which was understood any kind of play, each act of which contained a certain number of vocal pieces. These regulations brought forth a series of musical farces at the more fashionable houses, such as the Lyceum, and a number of strong dramas for audiences who loved more solid viands.

The greatest of melo-dramatists, if quantity be the test, of this latter period was Edward Fitzball. For many years this indefatigable playwright supplied both major and minor houses, Covent Garden, Drury Lane, Sadler's Wells, and the Surrey, with numberless spectacles, librettos, and dramas. His 'Floating Beacon' was one of the earliest, if not the earliest nautical drama of the kind that T. P. Cooke familiarised our fathers with, especially written for the glorification of the British tar, and to show that virtue is not only morally but physically stronger than vice, since one virtuous sailor was always equal to half-a-dozen 'piratical swabs.' It was a wonderful sight to see one of those 'terrific combats,' which was always made a particular feature in the bill. With a sword in each hand, the Jack Junk or the Ben the Boatswain

would attack any number of black-muzzled, long-haired, petticoat-trousered pirates, who, whatever their other failings might have been, were not deficient in courtesy, since they never objected to give their assailant breathing time. Then, with the most astounding confidence in his own quickness of eye and readiness of arm, he would sit upon the hilt of his sword, take out his tobacco-pouch, and refresh himself with a toothsome plug, all the time heaping upon his foes the most villainous epithets, which they endured with a patience truly pitiful; or if they advanced a step, down would come his sword upon one of their feet—a process he called cutting their corns; in fact, he played with them as a cat does with a mouse, certain the game was in his own hands.

Another curious variety of the melo-drama was 'the dog-piece,' in which the avenging Nemesis of vice was canine instead of human. The first and most famous of these plays was the 'Forest of Bondy; or the Dog of Montargis,' founded upon a well-known and veritable French story, of which the following is a brief *résumé*:—Aubrey, a young officer who is in great favour with his general, is set upon in a lonely part of the forest by two comrades, Macaire and Landry, who are jealous of the preference shown him, and, after a furious resistance, is murdered. Aubrey has a fine Newfoundland dog, which attends him wherever he goes, but which the villains have enticed from his side and tied to a tree, while they have committed the crime. The act-drop falls upon the death of Aubrey; it rises again upon the farm house, where the young officer has been staying; on rushes the dog, who has contrived to break his bonds, he jumps over a stile and pulls at the handle of the bell. Out come the people, one with a lantern, which the dog seizes in his mouth, and then leads the way to the scene of the murder. Macaire and Landry are suspected, and in the last scene, while they are protesting their innocence, on springs the canine detective, who, recognising no law but lynch law, fastens upon the red pad that Landry has concealed beneath his throat; grasping the dog's neck, to make him hold tighter, he rushes round the stage, then rolls over and over, shrieks 'Mussy, mussy!'—dog-men always pronounced the word so—but the faithful animal is inexorable, and the wretch expires in strong agonies. The new sensation was an immense success, and consequently dog-pieces and dog-men became as plentiful as blackberries. Some years ago, one of these latter, a man evidently of daring imagination, conceived the idea and carried it out, of altering 'Hamlet' into a dog-piece. The melancholy Prince was attended wherever he went by a faithful 'dawg,' which had belonged to his father, and, in the last scene, he saved his master from embruving his own hands in blood by taking upon

himself the office of Claudius's executioner. It must have been a novel spectacle to see the wicked king writhing under the fangs of a Newfoundland dog.

Although resembling it in every point, except that the one dealt with vice and virtue as they appear in baronial halls, and the other with vice and virtue as they appear in peasants' cottages and the back slums of towns, the domestic drama can scarcely be considered to be an offshoot of the melo-drama; the former owes its origin rather to the sentimental comedy of the last century, in which the frivolities of high life were blended with a pathetic story of poor and persecuted virtue. The works of Cumberland and Colman the younger, Holcroft, and Mrs. Inchbald afford numerous specimens of this kind of composition; in the drama the comedy was eliminated or changed into vulgar buffoonery, and the action was carried on to musical accompaniment. Neither the tyrant baron and persecuted heroine of the 'Monk' Lewis school, nor the Jack Junk and piratical swab of the Fitzball, were more absurd lay figures than the virtuous peasant and the pride of the village of the old domestic drama. Who does not remember that oppressively virtuous peasant, who never worked, but passed his whole time in preaching moral platitudes, who always carried a little bundle tied up in a cotton handkerchief—supposed to contain his wardrobe—at the end of his stick, who was ubiquitous when sweet Jessie or Rose was attacked by her enemy, the wicked squire? And oh! that wicked squire in sticking-plaster, crinkly boots, black frock coat and riding-whip—he never moved without a riding-whip. Wicked as he was he certainly had a hard time of it; everybody was down upon him; the low comedy man bullied him; the chambermaid gave him her mind pretty freely, and sometimes her umbrella; the heroine overwhelmed him with high-flown denunciations, and the virtuous peasant belaboured him with his fists, and, what must have been a worse infliction, with his sermons; nevertheless he was of a hopeful disposition, but limited vocabulary. 'Ha! foiled again! but it is no matter; a time will come, proud maiden,' &c.—this was his invariable formula after every defeat. Then there was the father of the heroine, with an ovine head of hair to which he was constantly referring. The first act usually fell upon his cursing his innocent daughter, who had been lured away by a villain. Of course there was always a marriage certificate that turned up in the last scene, for there was no tampering with the proprieties, no Gallic tendencies were allowed, in these pieces, and if a magdalen was introduced, she was punished as relentlessly as even one of her own sex could desire. And the language of these plays! The village maidens spoke in stilted

heroics adorned with tropes and metaphors, and the simplest expressions were converted into fine periphrases. But the authors scarcely exceeded in this respect the absurd diction which the fashionable audiences of Drury Lane and Covent Garden had admired half a century earlier in the writings of Cumberland and Mrs. Inchbald. Fashion in language, like fashion in dress, always descends in the social scale, and the verbal elegancies of one generation, like its costume, are the mode of the alley long after they have been rejected by the fashionable world.

The British public trembled, and wept, and laughed over these productions, and thought them very delightful until burlesque exposed their absurdities, and a terrific combat could be no longer witnessed without suggesting a Guy Faux figure with a sword under each arm—supposed to be through his body—looking out for a soft board to die upon, and afterwards coming to life again to join in a wild dance; the village maiden could no longer trip upon the stage without recalling the antics of Thorne and Terry, and a breakdown. The pride of the village and all her surroundings still flourish at certain suburban theatres, or at least at one, where the audience sympathise with them as deeply as ever. The last home of the old melo-drama, of the ‘Monk’ Lewis school, west of Temple Bar, was the old Queen’s, now the Prince of Wales’s, which was known among actors by the suggestive name of the ‘Dust-hole.’ The titles alone of some of the dramas produced there are dramatic curiosities. I remember one which particularly struck me; it was ‘The Poison Tree of Java; or, the Spectre Bride and the Demon Nun.’ I witnessed its performance; I have no recollection of the plot, but I remember that the villain was hurled into the corner thirteen times during the three acts while attempting his nefarious designs, and that I lost all patience with him for not repenting and trying the paths of virtue, just by way of experiment, and if only to free himself from the visitation of such objectionable ghosts.

With the ‘Colleen Bawn’ Mr. Dion Boucicault introduced a new school of melo-drama, which has since been dubbed the sensational; in this the actor and the author are subordinated to the scene-painter, carpenter, and property man, and the situation is made to depend upon scenic instead of imaginative effects. What a wonderful hit that water-cave scene made, with its gauze waters, and double trap—which by the way, it is said, was the idea of the New York stage carpenter, and *not* of the author; then followed ‘The Octoroon,’ with the burning ship; ‘Arrah-na-Pogue,’ prettiest of Irish dramas, with the ingenious tower set; ‘The Streets of London,’ with the burning house; ‘After Dark,’ with the Under-

ground Railway. But in these days, when the Meritts and Pettits and Simses have grasped the sceptre of the great Dion, all the sensational scenes just mentioned would no more than suffice for a single drama, so ravenous have we become for realistic horrors. ✓

Melo-drama, assuredly, is still one of the most popular forms of dramatic entertainment; it flourishes at Drury Lane, at the Princess's, at the Adelphi, and sometimes even at the Lyceum, to say nothing of the theatres it languishes at. But it is not the old melo-drama; it is sensational, but seldom romantic; it is realistic ✓ to an extreme, and its characters are certainly taken from life, though from a kind of life concerning the propriety of presenting which there may be various opinions; poetic justice is still fulfilled to the end, but vice and virtue get a little more mixed than it used to with the old writers. Fashions, however, change in stage art as well as in literature and everything else, and moralise as we will, we are all equally powerless to resist it; we can no more recall the old relish with which we read the books and witnessed the plays of our youth than we could recall the pride we took in the garments we wore at the time, which we then considered the height of elegance, and which we should now regard as the acme of hideousness. As an instance, not so many years had elapsed between the time that Charles Kean thrilled all London with the supernatural romance of the 'Corsican Brothers,' and that of its revival under Mr. Irving. Many of those who remembered the first production went to the Lyceum thinking that the old sensations excited by the rising of the ghost through the famous trap would be renewed; but with every disposition to be so impressed, the experiment was a failure; there was no thrill, the delusion never enthralled us; the peculiar mental condition that these effects had once appealed to had passed away, and but for the splendid mounting, which far surpassed all that had been seen before, and the fame of the management, the 'Corsican Brothers' would have been a dead failure.

H. BARTON BAKER.



## To an Unseaworthy Ship.

(*Hor. I. 14.*)

SHIP, to the roadstead rolled,  
 What dost thou?—O, once more  
 Regain the port. Behold!  
 Thy sides are bare of oar,  
 Thy tall mast wounded sore  
 Of Africus, and see,  
 What shall thy spars restore!—  
 Tempt not the tyrant sea!

What cable now will hold  
 When all drag out from shore!  
 What god canst thou, too bold,  
 In time of need implore!  
 Look! for thy sails flap o'er,  
 Thy stiff shrouds part and flee,  
 Fast—fast thy seams outpour,—  
 Tempt not the tyrant sea!

What though thy ribs of old  
 The pines of Pontus bore!  
 Not now to stern of gold  
 Men trust, or painted proue!  
 Thou, or thou count'st it store  
 A toy of winds to be,  
 Shun thou the Cyclads' roar,—  
 Tempt not the tyrant sea!

### ENVOY.

SHIP OF THE STATE, before  
 A care, and now to me  
 A hope in my heart's core—  
 Tempt not the tyrant sea!

AUSTIN DOBSON.

## A Cross.

THERE is no little city in Europe, actually none, so curious, so interesting, as Ragusa. Persons better acquainted with that coast have told me that in quaintness other Slav-Venetian towns may challenge it. My own experience of Cattaro and Antivari confirms this statement in some measure. But Ragusa is unique in memorials of ancient state and wealth, above all in its story. Of that story, in truth, I have learned but just enough to see that most students read it in a different version. It is one, however, of special fascination. This is the antique capital of that single branch in the southern Slav family which has yet proved itself European in any sense other than geographical. It was a republic, the rival of Venice in arms and arts, commerce and enterprise, for ages. The winged lion finally overcame and enslaved it, but Ragusan patriots will not admit that their forefathers were conquered by Venice. It was the shadow of the Turk that vanquished them, the iron barrier crushing their small territory, the incessant threats of a malicious savage. I have no opinion on that matter. The legend of Ragusa thrills one like that of a mysterious and silent ruin. Be it remembered that this small sleepy town gave us the fine word 'argosy,' for a great ship stored with costliest goods.

From one stately gateway in the massive walls to the other is but a hundred and fifty yards at most, but at every yard one may pause to admire. Just within, on the right hand, is a fountain, somewhat of the Turkish style. On market days and holidays it is a pretty sight when the girls assemble at this place. Every village has its peculiarity of dress, mostly bright in colour, but the Herzegovinian is so supremely charming that it kills all others. The robe, of coarse black cloth, should be properly called a chemise; it has little ornament. But from the round 'turban' cap descends a veil, framing a face often pretty, always pleasing to the eye thus set off. This drapery is of thick white material, falling to the bottom of the skirt, and so large that a girl can wrap her whole body therein if she please. World-wide travel has not shown me a dress so becoming in severe simplicity.

Opposite to the fountain is a church, and then the broad, fine street, smoothly paved, stretches to the other gate. Its blocks of

stone houses date, they tell you, from the fourteenth century; saving the tones which age alone can give, they might have been raised yesterday. Tall, solid, exactly alike and precisely aligned, they present that ideal of street architecture which we are now laboriously trying to introduce; but we shall not easily match these handsome structures. Between each block endless flights of steps climb the mountain side, with a narrow landing at intervals where terraced cross-ways traverse the ascent. Many a house here has its mouldering coat of arms; many a fine remnant of departed splendour one observes. Ragusa and Cattaro have been little mines of treasure for Viennese dealers in bric-à-brac, and the supply has not yet failed. Danisch Effendi, the Turkish Consul-General, is still adding to the museum of lovely cabinets, carved furniture, embroideries, and what not, which every visitor of taste admires with astonishment.

The handsome little street is broken only by an antique statue on its pedestal, and by the twisted, richly-ornamented columns of the Doge's palace. In a small square opposite stand other houses, finely proportioned, gracefully sculptured and decorated, abodes of Ragusan grandees in a happier time. Of these I do not speak, for I recollect vaguely, and are they not chronicled in Murray? All my wish is to give a background for my little picture.

One day I entered that church mentioned, opposite the fountain. It is a building full of story, doubtless, but an ignorant traveller must pronounce it dull. Nothing there dwells in my memory save the cross, which is my present theme. It stood upon a little table by the wall, dusty, worm-eaten, splashed with wax, and showing many a black gap in its surface of mother-o'-pearl. The decoration caught my eye, for I had seen the like, in ruder workmanship, on Russian shrines. I asked the verger, who in black patched robe was following, how that sacred object came to be treated with such neglect.

'Oh,' said he, 'a peasant left it many years ago, and he is dead.'

'If it does not belong to the church,' I said, 'I will give you fifteen thalers for it.'

The verger held up his hands, as one who rebukes a sacrilegious person, thought about it, dropped his indignant palms, and followed us out, pondering. Half an hour afterwards he brought it under his robe to the small hotel where I was staying outside the gates; a quaint hostelry, with a grove of trees before where market-peasants camped, the city ditch and its mantled wall upon one side, a large courtyard in rear. There we dined under a vine-clad trellis; the standing dishes of our bill of fare, fried cuttle-fish

and paprika huhn and pilaff. All the naval uniforms of Europe were exhibited, for the fleets were 'demonstrating' off Gravosa at that time. The clang of swords, the tinkling of glasses never ceased throughout the day, and pleasant courteous officers of the garrison sat in groups through the long dull evening. I took some pains to learn what the Ragusans thought of our naval demonstration. Some enthusiasts may be surprised to hear that those ultra-patriotic Slavs disapproved and disliked it in general, loathed it in particular. But if one thinks a little, aided by some knowledge of the circumstances, their feeling ceases to surprise. It appeared to the Dalmatian as an outward sign of Europe's solidarity with Austria, and the gentlest distrust Austria. Then, it was designed to support Montenegro. Towards that principality Ragusa feels exactly as Edinburgh felt towards the Highlanders of Rob Roy's time. The common bond of hostility towards the German is not strong enough to unite the civilised Dalmatian Slav with his predatory and ferocious kin of Montenegro and Bosnia. Ragusa sympathises with Cattaro and the districts on the frontier, which have been exposed to invasion and outrage from those savages as long as the memory of man records. It was irritated to observe all Europe following Austria's lead, as it understood the matter, in strengthening the bands of brigands, whilst Dalmatia was left in slavery to the stranger.

I could not exaggerate the abhorrence of these people towards that kindred neighbouring race which has been described as the Christian Hero, and so on. They persist in declaring it a tribe of irreclaimable banditti, bloodthirsty, mischievous beyond all others, an enemy of human kind. With bitter and unanswerable force they point to the farmhouses unroofed, black with smoke, that line the Bocche, surprised in some night of terror, the peaceful inhabitants all murdered, and the soldiers only warned by flames that steal and creep and burst in triumphant fury when the marauders have regained their mountain side. They confess in truth that things have not been so bad of late, but the old houses stand for a testimony. And they bid you observe the fetid, noisome giant slouching along their streets, his mouth agape at the signs of a very modest civilisation which his vulture eyes burn to destroy. For my own part, I think they do the Montenegrins injustice, but I am not surprised. They are foul barbarians, for circumstances have made them such. But there is gallantry and manliness and shrewd intelligence amongst them, which constrain the disinterested traveller to wish them well. Thieves they are, because men fierce and strong will always act upon the motto, 'Thou shalt want before I want!' murderers, because they do not

feel the value of life, their own or another's. The organised and desperate brigandage of Montenegro is produced by want of food. Each nook and pocket of their rocks has been cultivated for generations. It is no extravagance to say that wherever fifty plants of maize or potato can find room there they will be found, though the nearest cottage be miles away. Bits of soil twenty feet square are treated as fields. And even this cultivation does not suffice to feed an enterprising and prolific people. They plunder to live. But it would be quite useless to urge this excuse upon the sufferers.

Ragusans disliked the demonstration, in particular, because our sailors shocked them. Most specially their friends, the Russians, offended in this respect. Unlike other Sclavs—other Sclavs at least of my acquaintance—Dalmatians are sober and temperate, to such degree that extreme indulgence is unknown. Drunkenness perplexed, irritated, frightened them, rather than disgusted. I remember a delightful little story told me by the aide-de-camp of the general in command. A noble, dwelling at Ragusa, sent to head-quarters in desperate haste, begging immediate help. The Russians were attacking his mansion. A detachment of troops was sent forthwith at the double. It found two sailors, very drunk and very ill, leaning in a helpless manner against the house-wall, surrounded by the servants armed, with whom they exchanged most miserable repartees in a tongue unusually unintelligible. They were escorted or carried to Gravosa, and sent aboard their vessel. The Count protested that life was unbearable under such alarming conditions, and he withdrew to his country seat that night. I am pleased to record that our English sailors made less scandal than any, less even than the Italian. But it must be owned that none got leave without most rigorous scrutiny.

I have wandered somewhat from my cross and its legend. The trophy, with its stand, is two feet high, made of some brown wood nearly rotten, veneered in front, inlaid at sides and back with mother-o'-pearl and ivory. The florials—is not that the correct expression?—at top and half-way down the body, are roses, very prettily fashioned, engraved and shaded in black lines. Above the Figure on the Cross is St. Mark, writing, with the eagle at his shoulder. Various saints and martyrs are depicted beneath it, with the Virgin at foot, a dagger pointing to her heart. She is again represented on the stand in a medallion, holding out a string of beads; the Crowned Child in her arms also offers a rosary. A medallion smaller and lower at each side presents, the one, a saint with a sword; the other, a saint with a bell.

Between them, two arms outspread before a double Russian cross complete the figures. The sides, back, extremities of the arms, and interstices have graceful inlaying of roses and arabesques.

The verger assured me that this relic had never been considered the property of the Church. The parish priest authorised him to sell it, when he named my offer. Under all the circumstances I believed this, but he was in a desperate hurry. I let him go, and at evening time despatched the trusty Spero with a thaler to buy drink, and injunctions to extract all the history belonging to my cross. Spero was a courier, who never caused me five minutes' irritation or annoyance during six months of the roughest service. He may be heard of at the Saint George's Hotel, Corfu. Be the hint fruitful to those it may concern.

Spero brought me back the narrative which figuratively hangs about my cross.

Once upon a time, towards the beginning of this century as I understood, a Herzegovinian peasant of the better class made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. He was accompanied by his younger son. Upon the way, in the Holy Land, it appears, they rendered some service to a monastery, the nature of which I did not ascertain. In recognition thereof, whatever it was, the grateful abbot presented Michaeloudovitch with this cross, esteemed of quite peculiar sanctity. He also blessed the old man, his boy present, his daughters, and all future generations of the family. But he inquired particularly why the eldest son was absent, and when his father unwillingly confessed that this ill-regulated youth did not care to make the pilgrimage, the abbot specially excepted him from the benefits implored of Heaven.

When the pair returned with their sacred treasure, in no long time the influence of the holy man's prayers became visible. Michaeloudovitch's landlord was a young Moslem Bey, handsome and chivalrous, if masterful, as are many of his class to this day, in a region still uncorrupted by the decadence of Islam. He fell in love with the eldest girl, and engaged, if his suit were peacefully accepted, not to interfere with the bride's religion, not to marry a second wife, and to let her bring up her children unmolested, if only she would not resist their fulfilment of the outward ceremonies of his faith. The girl returned his love. The parents, though distressed, and in some measure coerced, no doubt, assented. So their eldest daughter married the Bey, a man rich, perhaps, even by the standard of English country gentlemen.

I hear an objector exclaiming at the outset of my story that the match was impossible for both sides. It would be so now, but it was not impossible, nor even rare, a generation since.

When the Christians were hopeless of deliverance, and the Mussulmans did not dream of revolt, they lived on much better terms. Neither party was fanatical. Beys did not contest that their forefathers had been Christian nobles, who apostatised to save their property and lives; peasants did not deny the argument of flesh and blood. Both Moslem and Christian now would foam to think of such a marriage, and the Bey would scarcely be restrained from murder to whom those conditions were proposed.

The younger son of Michaeloudovitch was forthwith appointed overseer of his brother-in-law's estates, a position of great dignity and emolument. His sisters became engaged to the handsomest and most substantial yeomen of the neighbourhood. Everything the father put his hand to prospered, unless it were of a nature to benefit directly the eldest son. The luck of this youth became so strangely bad that every one recognised the visible curse of Heaven. He grew bitter and dejected.

Meanwhile the cross had been deposited in the village church, where presently it began to work miracles. All the population of the district flocked thither on saints' days. The outcast son was unremitting in his devotion. He connected this relic with his ill-fortune, and spent days before it. To no purpose. Then he proposed to make the grand pilgrimage, but fell into a precipice at starting, broke his leg, and lost a valuable horse. As soon as he recovered he set forth again, but on the first day's journey he met brigands, Turkish renegades, who took all his money and beat him sore. Again he set out, and reached Trebinje the second day. There the hahn unaccountably took fire, and he escaped with bare life.

It is not surprising that such a series of mischances weighed on a superstitious mind. Stancho, his relatives, and all the village conceived that Heaven followed him with hate. No one would advance him money for a fourth attempt, and his own resources were exhausted. After moping and pining, the rebellious fit more natural to a Herzegovinian peasant seized hold on him. One day the community was horrified to learn that Stancho had apostatised, and was lying at the house of a Moolah in Trebinje. That practical toleration of a former age, to which I have alluded, did not extend to a case like this. Christian and Moslem lived peaceably together, because their stations, their religious boundaries, were exactly defined. All their instincts revolted from a change of creed. The Turkish convert to Christianity was murdered forthwith; the renegade Christian, if his former fellows dared not kill him, found no sympathy anywhere, and no help beyond the Imam's door.

All communication with his family was dropped, of course, and the next news of Stancho came through his brother-in-law, the Bey. Under the new name of Selim, he applied for a commission in the militia of the district—to put into English form the spirit of his request. It was scornfully refused, and Stancho vanished for many months. He had good cause to repent a desperate step, which had not bettered his fortunes on earth, and had forfeited his hope of Heaven. When next heard of, he had cast aside the turban, and was fighting on the side of Montenegro, engaged, as usual, in a war with Turkey. He distinguished himself in the field. But there were many Herzegovinian volunteers in the army of Tchernagora. One of them recognised Stancho, who promptly cut him down. But the secret was out. In consideration of his services the mountaineers spared his life, but they dismissed him.

There is no race of men so dangerous as the fighting Slav, the Montenegrin, the Bosnian, the Herzegovinian, the Croat. Austria knows too bitterly what a terrible antagonist is the civilised Dalmatian when he takes up arms. If these wilder peoples ever had a character resembling the Russ and Serb and Bulgar, circumstances have transformed them. The contrast now is striking. Quick of intelligence but stubborn, cunning though fearless, patient though excitable, the mountain Slav is a very incarnation of man the perfected wild beast. Under a mask of soldierly frankness he is perversely treacherous, as a rule, but also he is bound to the death by his own shibboleths if one knew them. Pity does not move him; his brain is cool whilst his passions blaze to madness. And he has the physical advantages which give his character full play. Generally tall, often gigantic, he is always strong, for none but the vigorous survive. His features are handsome, his eyes, of palish blue or amber-yellow, have the keen look fitting to a warrior. A long fair moustache up-curved hides his stern mouth; his bearing is martial, and his stride full of arrogant self-confidence. Though rough with his fellows, a man of the upper class is superbly courteous to the stranger. And a manly costume sets off every advantage.

Let no one think this description exaggerated. I am acquainted with many countries and many peoples. I could name more than one race of giants bigger than the mountain Slav, though readers acquainted with that family might be inclined to doubt. I could name people as insanely brave and even more ferocious, but there is none which in all respects so thoroughly, so picturesquely, embodies the spirit of human savagery. Terrible, indeed, is the man of this race who becomes desperate.

Stancho yielded to his longings and went home; he reached



the hut unnoticed, under his Montenegrin dress. Old Michaeloudovitch was absent, and the mother disowned him. He refused to leave, claiming his position in the family; some village women overheard the dispute. Luckily for Stancho, the men were all at work, but these stalwart matrons set upon the renegade, disarmed him, drove him forth with blows and stones. A rude antagonist is the woman of those parts, graceful though her costume. She has broad shoulders and sturdy limbs; she has seen battle, and much worse than that. What virtues remain are not those belonging to her sex.

Bruised, disgraced, delirious with rage, Stancho pushed through the woods. Climbing upward, he crossed the bridle-path which led from the village to the castle. A girl was descending—one of the Christian maidens whom the Bey's young wife kept with her. In days gone by there had been love passages between Stancho and this damsel. She recognised her former suitor, and ran back full speed. He overtook and seized her; she would not listen, but screamed for help; in the brute madness of his fury, Stancho lifted her and dashed her with all his strength against a tree.

When the poor creature regained her senses, maimed for life, she repeated his wild threat of smashing every soul that lived in his native village as he had smashed her. It caused some alarm, and the sentries at night were doubled; but Herzegovinians are used to carry menace of this sort lightly. The atmosphere of peril and carelessness is that they are used to. Talking once with Buko Petrovitch about the probability of an insurrection before the late troubles arose, the Montenegrin general said to me: 'It will happen, not because the people are oppressed, but because life is too quiet, the Austrian police too active in protecting them. Herzegovinians like to protect themselves.'

Time passed on, and nothing was heard of Stancho; the extra precautions were withdrawn. Two years afterwards a band of brigands fell upon the village, murdered all who could not escape, men, women, children, and fired it. Michaeloudovitch and his wife had died meanwhile, but the second son perished with all his family. At morning the Bey pursued, with what force he could gather. The brigands were numerous, Turks, Pomaks, broken Montenegrins, blacks, ruffians of the deepest dye, well armed. Upon the second day Stancho sent a message, announcing he would stand at a certain place. But, as the pursuers threaded a defile, they were suddenly overwhelmed. The Bey escaped. Urged by the desire of vengeance, and by a wife of the true savage stock, he gave himself wholly to the task of hunting down these murderers, with no conspicuous success, however. Brigands were killed from

time to time ; some were captured and tormented, but Stancho's exploits were audacious, and won him a legendary fame from a harassed but sympathetic peasantry. Recruits poured to his band.

The cross had been saved. It was taken to the castle, and set in the private apartments of the lady. Some considerable time after the destruction of his village, the Bey learned from his spies where Stancho would be found on a given night. Relying on the information, he set forth with his armed retainers, leaving but a score of men in garrison. At midnight the castle was alarmed, sentries fired and shouted, there was scuffling at the parapet. In a few moments the corridors rang with a clash of arms, a tread of hurrying feet, the screams of the butchered, the yells of the victorious, the splintering of doors. The women servants sleeping near fled to their mistress ; she stood knife in hand, white and panting, but firm of soul. Death was present in that little group of girls, not threatening themselves alone.

Stancho appeared in the doorway, wearing the fez and a whip of Broussa silk around it ; half a score of eager, pushing ruffians behind him were kept back by the outstretched handjar. 'No one shall harm you !' he said. 'I remain here !'

His followers dispersed about the room, forcing chests, casting out embroideries and linen, jewelry and precious things. Stancho, looking round, observed the cross upon a bracket, stepped forward, and took it in his hand.

'The charm did not protect our village,' he said, smiling fiercely, 'and it has not protected your castle, sister ! Better to trust a sharp sword and a steady pistol, whether we be Christian or Pomak !'

His sister had quietly crept up beside him. She snatched a pistol at his waist and fired point-blank, a few inches from his heart. The men around sprang on her, but with a trembling hand Stancho beat them back. He sat upon a rifled chest, drew his other pistol, and sounded it with the chased silver ramrod. Pale and shivering involuntarily, he thought awhile ; then stooped to pick up an embroidered handkerchief, wrapped the cross therein, and silently laid it down.

Meanwhile the brigands had collected all the plunder of that apartment. They did not trouble the women, for by other means they probably knew where treasure lay. Laughing and hallooing, as is the nature of the Slav triumphant, they noisily filed out, carrying their bundles. Stancho rose and followed, taking the cross. Without a word he left his sister. The dull, firm tread of his sandalled feet was smothered in a wilder burst of cries and yells outside.

Horrible work was doing there, but the Bey's wife gave no heed. She threw on her clothes, and was ready in a moment. 'Listen, you girls! If I miss my lord in the forest, tell him that these Pomaks stay at Radomir to-morrow! They said so!'

'I will go with you, hanoum!' 'And I!' 'And I!' they cried. But the mistress did not stay to hear. Taking a key, she passed into the dusky corridor, treading carefully, less for fear of stepping in the blood than of slipping and so raising an alarm, gained a secret stair, and reached the woods by an unguarded postern.

Upon the following day, towards afternoon, the brigands were securely sleeping. After a long night march they had breakfasted copiously with their friends of Radomir. A line of pickets, with sentries thrown far in advance, protected them. One of them, retiring at the double, announced suspicious movements in his front. Whilst the picket dispersed for observation, a messenger ran to alarm the main body. He passed along the village street towards head-quarters, summoning the sleepers as he went, and sent a comrade raising the same cry from the other side. All the brigands started to their arms and mustered, but the captain was not to be found. His share of loot, his arms, were there, but no Selim Effendi. Perplexed and angry they set forth on their retreat, under command of the lieutenant. But from every road came warnings of danger, and the band broke into small parties, to make their way through the tangled woods. A rendezvous was named, but few reached it. Till evening the fight went on, and this redoubtable corps of banditti ceased to trouble any more. But Selim Effendi was not discovered either amongst the slain or the prisoners. And his few comrades who got through looked for him vainly.

That miraculous escape, when a loaded pistol was discharged at his very heart, suddenly aroused the superstition, and a better feeling than superstition, of his early years. Holding the cross he was preserved from certain death. He took it as a first, last chance of Heaven's mercy. With the instinct of a Slav, Stancho kept his secret, directed the midnight march as usual, the portioning of the booty. So soon as the grumblings and mutterings of the band, perfunctory on such occasions, had subsided, when all was still he crept away with nothing but his clothes and the cross, still enveloped in its napkin. Behind the first bush he threw away his fez, and stamped upon it. The distant peal of musketry all the afternoon told him of another serious peril from which good angels had preserved him. At the nearest monastery Stancho took asylum, and there so punished his guilty flesh that the monks

declared him a saint. Some of the brethren had near as much cause for penitence.

It was years afterwards that he passed through Ragusa, in the robe of an orthodox monk, on his way to Jerusalem. A vague tradition was still extant, which recalled his burning eyes and long flaxen beard dashed with grey. What impulse led him to deposit his cross where it would not be duly honoured is a mystery. He never returned from the pilgrimage. Fanatics of his stamp often vanish on that road. They start without money, they take what they need under a plea, honestly advanced, of their sacred character. They insult the Moslem, and they quarrel with all Christians who differ from their views. It seems a paradox, but on reflection one perceives it true, that if the lands they traverse were more civilised the proportion which reached the holy shrines would be very much smaller than it is.

That is the legend attaching to my cross. I have filled up outlines, but added nothing to the incidents which Spero transmitted in a few brief sentences.

F. BOYLE.

## The Admiral's Ward.

BY. MRS. ALEXANDER.

### CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE few days which intervened before Mr. and Mrs. Piers and suite left Paris for England were evidently busy ones to Reginald. He did not, as formerly, absent himself for the whole day and often much of the night, but he wrote a good deal in his own room, and came to and fro, as if greatly occupied. Laura had easily found a moment when she could give him the memoranda she had prepared, unseen by any one. 'Read it carefully, Reginald,' she said. 'When in London we can discuss the subject thoroughly and arrange our plans.'

Reginald had merely replied, 'We will do so,' and thrust the packet into an inner pocket.

These days were some of the most painful Laura had ever spent.

To observe how Reginald shrank from meeting her eyes, to see his pale downcast look, the indescribable beaten aspect, which his wife attributed to indisposition; all this was infinitely distressing. It seemed to her as though she was herself bowed down by the shame she had been obliged to bring upon the hero of her early youth. Do what she would she could not think of him without compassion, and the keenest sorrow for her shattered ideal.

The first time that Winifrid was quite alone with her and safe, which was the day following the receipt of the anonymous letter, as they were driving in the Bois (for Winnie was suddenly anxious to take all means to recover her strength and spirits), she said, 'I gave the letter to Reginald last night, Laura. He was so restless I did not think it could make him worse; he was lying on the sofa, for he did not go to bed; he walked about and sometimes lay down. I said, "Here is a strange letter I have just had," and added the words I said I would speak. I did not make the least scene. He read it, but was not so angry or upset as I expected. He seemed as if occupied about something else. He read it twice through, and examined it and the envelope carefully. "It is very extraordinary," he said. "Who can have written it? She has many enemies, but this is too much; the misrepresentation is ingenious." Then, after a pause, with a sort of effort he went on: "You were right, Winnie, to show it to me; you will leave it in my hands?"

'I never wish to see it again,' said I. "You have yielded to my wish, and I am ready to trust you!" Ah, Laura! that was not quite true, but I will try to make it true. He put out his hand and drew me down to him. "I believe you are as wise as well as a good woman, Winnie," said he; "let us try and make the best of each other. You have a generous heart. Would you—could you—still care for me if I were old and sickly—and—and poor, Winnie?" Oh, Laura! I never had such a struggle not to make a scene. My heart yearned to him; and yet it burned, too, with anger, to think that for all the indifference he had shown even in my cruel sorrow, all the agony he must know he had inflicted on me, he never said, "Forgive me; let me atone to you;" but I knew that my—our—only chance was in at least *seeming* strong. So I replied, "When you are old, Reggie, I shall be old too; and for the rest, you know me, and you need no answer." "Yes, I think I do know you." He kissed me kindly, but still as if his mind were full of something else. "Go away to rest," he went on; "I fear you have had but little sleep of late. I will send for you if I feel worse; but I am not ill, Winnie—only uneasy." He looked so ghastly pale, with an expression as if he saw some far-away horror, that I could not resist putting my arms round him. "Reggie," I said, "let me help you, if you need help, for I *can* love you still." He pressed me to him for an instant, and said in a low hoarse voice, "Good-night—God bless you!"

The last words were interrupted by irrepressible sobs. 'Have I done well, Laura? Do you think I have done wisely?'

'It seems to me you have done nobly; and if Reginald is not more yours than he ever was before, he is unworthy of you,' returned Laura with warmth, contrasting vividly in her own mind the truth and earnestness of the wife with the slight, selfish nature of the husband.

Winnie sighed. 'It may all come right,' she said. 'But I shall never feel quite the same again, though he is still very dear to me. I have an odd sort of pity for him; I think he has been under a spell.'

It was a dry crisp evening when they reached London. Though Winifrid begged Laura to stay with her still, the latter decided to go straight to Mrs. Crewe's. She thought it better for husband and wife to be alone together; and she felt sure her absence would be an infinite relief to Reginald, as it was to herself not to see him.

The simple yet not ungraceful homeliness of Mrs. Crewe's house never before seemed so delightful as on her escape from the

false position, the unavoidable mask, which her relations with Reginald compelled her to assume. The transparent honesty, the natural kindliness of tone which pervaded the small establishment produced something the same effect as breathing mountain air after being imprisoned in a back alley of a great town. Everything and every one was *en fête* to receive her. The door was thrown open by Collins, who grinned with pleasure, and displayed Mrs. Crewe in a most becoming cap, standing under the lamp with Topsy under one arm, and behind her the Admiral in the doorway of the dining-room.

'My darling girl, how late you are! I began to fear there was an accident or something. How tired you look! I am sure we are delighted to have you back. Here is the Admiral, quite wearying for you, and this dear cat wandered about looking for you for two or three days.'

This speech was broken by sundry enormous hugs; and then Laura was passed on to the gentler and more subdued greeting of her kind guardian.

'Come in, my dear; you evidently need refreshment. How is the poor young mother? Ah! I have no doubt that poor infant was sacrificed to wretched food and improper treatment in a foreign country. Collins! make haste with Miss Piers' chop and the buttered toast. I would not let her put it down till you came, dear; but the fire is clear, and it will be ready in ten or fifteen minutes,' &c.

'Oh, how nice it is to be with you again!' said Laura, the tears springing to her eyes as she looked back at the agitating scenes through which she had passed.

'I am sure, dear, it must all have been very trying,' returned Mrs. Crewe. 'But Winifrid is young, she will soon recover; and I have no doubt you had every comfort and elegance about you that money could get. Mr. Piers is a very liberal young man, and quite the gentleman; still I flatter myself your heart is in our humble home.'

'It is, indeed,' said Laura, with a smile and a blush. 'Tell me, dear Admiral,' taking his hand again in hers, 'have you been well, quite well, since I left?'

She looked at him earnestly, for his face seemed pale and worn.

'Not quite so robust as usual,' he said; 'but I am nearly myself again, thanks to Mrs. Crewe's kind care.'

'He was very seriously ill,' cried Mrs. Crewe; 'bronchitis and I do not know what. I wanted to send for you, but he would not hear of it. Come away and take off your things while Collins is getting your supper ready.'

When they had reached the privacy of Laura's room, Mrs. Crewe was in her element. 'You see, my dear girl, I have taken advantage of your absence to make a few improvements. I hope you like your new curtains. You see they are real curtains. You can draw them across; the old ones were a mere bit of drapery, to take off the naked look. I had a woman in the house to make them, and a machine. I am going to buy the machine, paying for it by weekly instalments; isn't that a convenience? I have calculated that if we do with half a pound less butter and only two puddings a week, I can pay for it in twenty-six weeks; so I have told Collins she really must use the nice clean dripping both for herself and cooking.'

'Indeed, Mrs. Crewe?'

'Wait a bit, my dear. Look here—I have bought you another chest of drawers, polished deal you see, and bevelled edges; got it such a bargain—not that I would mind what I spent on you; you are my own dear daughter, though you are not my son's wife yet. *He* is no weathercock, like finer gentlemen—no chance of *his* changing; but you see, dear, I am very anxious to save a little money, and I have begun to lay by. Why, you have hardly noticed Toppy, and the dear pet quite knows you,' &c.

The following day Mrs. Crewe proposed to pay a visit of condolence to Winifrid.

The preparations for this ceremony were considerable, and in proportion to what Mrs. Crewe thought was due to the rank and fashion of the person to be visited. Laura therefore excused herself for preceding her good hostess, as she had promised to be with her cousin early, for Mr. and Mrs. Piers intended to make a very short stay in town. The dowager Mrs. Piers too was expected that evening on her return from the Grange, where she had been staying with her daughter, so this was about the only free day at Winifrid's disposal.

Laura was anxious to see how Winnie had borne the fatigue of their hasty journey, but still more so for some communication with Reginald as to their future plan of action. It was now four days since she had given him her ultimatum. How earnestly she hoped he would be honest and straightforward with her, and start afresh! but she knew that his whole future depended on the secret of his weak dishonesty being kept secret.

Winnie had not yet risen when Laura reached the hotel. She had been greatly fatigued, her maid said, and Mr. Piers had persuaded her to rest. Laura was admitted immediately.

The curtains were partly drawn to exclude the light; but one



ray of sunshine fell upon the pillow and lit up the face which lay upon it, and Laura was struck by the subtle change that had come to the well-known countenance.

It had a pale loveliness, a grave composure, a steadfast look which took from its youthfulness, while it added beauty. It was the face of one who had tasted the bitter fruit of the tree of knowledge, and from whom the glorious unsuspecting simplicity of Eden's inexperience had passed away for ever.

'Law'm,' cried Farrar, 'the sun is in your eyes,' and she hastened to exclude it; but the impression remained with Laura and revealed to her that Winifrid had entered a new stage on life's journey, where courage and patience had replaced hope and joy. 'How good of you to come so early!' said Winnie, holding out her hand. 'I hardly hoped to see you so soon. Am I not lazy to be here? But Reginald begged me to rest, and I did not like to contradict him. After all, I have nothing to get up for. How did you find every one?'

For a while Winnie listened with some interest to Laura's details; then her attention wandered, and her eyes became distrait.

Laura paused, and there was a short silence, which Winnie broke, speaking in a low dreamy tone, as if to herself: 'I seem to miss my poor little baby boy more than ever here. I was so happy, so full of brightest hope, when we left London not five months ago! and now, all is so changed, myself most of all; I seem to have no occupation, no hope. I thought, just now, why should I get up? I have nothing to do, no duty to perform.'

'It is natural you should think so at present; but you will knit up the ravelled skein of your life, and find new interests and occupations, dearest Winnie, later on.'

'I hope so—I do hope so!' Another short pause. 'Do you know, Laura,' she resumed, 'I feel strangely uneasy about Reginald. He looks so ghastly white, and has such a curious fixed, almost despairing, expression, and I cannot get him to open his heart. Believe me, something occurred in Paris, of which we know nothing, which cut him up awfully, and made him change his plans. I wish I could find out, not from curiosity, but that I might help him or comfort him. I feel uneasy if he is out of my sight, and he is very little in it. But he is kind, indifferently kind.' A short deep sigh interrupted her, and she went on.

'He had a letter from Madame Moscynski this morning. He was sitting here talking to me when the letters were brought up; and, though he shuffled them all together, I caught a glimpse of

her writing, I could not mistake it, but I took no notice. I do not want to tease him when he seems so unhappy. So long as she is at a distance I do not fear.'

'I do not think there is much to fear,' said Laura thoughtfully — 'except that Reginald may have been losing heavily at cards enough to account for his gloom.'

'I am sure I should not mind that, if he would stop now,' cried Winnie. 'I should not mind being poor if we could only be all and all to each other, as we were once—ah! for how short a time!'

'I do not think Reginald would like poverty,' said Laura; 'I hope you never will be poor. But, Winnie, if you do not intend to receive Mrs. Crewe in your room, you had better dress.'

'Oh, yes, certainly! and then I will drive back with her. Poor dear Mrs. Crewe! How I should like to ask her down to Pierslynn; but somehow I do not think she is a favourite with Reginald, and do you remember how savage he used to be to Denzil Crewe? That was because Denzil admired *me*. I always liked Denzil, he is so good and firm. Perhaps it would have been better for every one if I had married him.'

'I do not think so,' said Laura softly, with a smile that Winnie dimly thought was peculiar.

'Well, then, dear, go into the sitting-room and I will dress. Perhaps Reggie will come in. He went to the bank, I know, this morning, and I think he will come in to luncheon.'

Laura obeyed, and, taking up the 'Times,' looked vaguely through the shipping intelligence.

But her own thoughts were more interesting. Winnie's utter unconsciousness of the coming reverses touched her deeply. Perhaps the fire of trial might draw her and her husband nearer; perhaps detection might work a moral revolution in Reginald; yet she did not feel very hopeful. There was something callous, something disappointing, in the way he had taken the terrible tidings of Laura's discovery and intentions. Again, was it not rather hard to judge justly of a man so stunned, so paralysed, as he must have been?

While she pondered these things, the door opened, and the object of her thoughts walked in.

His appearance warranted his wife's uneasiness, but he did not seem surprised or disturbed by Laura's presence.

'I returned in hopes of having a word with you,' he said after a slight greeting. 'The less you and I put on paper to each other the better; but I want to arrange a meeting when we can talk long and uninterruptedly, and then I must get away the day after to-

morrow to Pierslynn. I, too, have a proposition to make, but I will not put it on paper.'

'I will meet you where you wish,' said Laura, feeling her usual dislike to encounter his eye, or to speak with him.

'To-morrow,' he resumed, 'Winnie spends the day with my mother; meet me at the Charing Cross Hotel. I will have a private room, and we can talk as long as we like.'

'Very well,' replied Laura; 'Charing Cross at two?'

'Yes, at two. I need not make a note of our rendezvous,' he added with a bitter smile; 'it is not likely to slip my memory.'

A short embarrassed pause ensued. 'Is Winnie up?' he asked.

'Yes, and nearly dressed. She expects a visit from Mrs. Crewe.'

'Does she? Then, I shall be off; I am in no mood to stand her nonsense.'

'Do you dine here to-day?' asked Laura.

'I am not sure; I think not. Why? can't you stay with Winnie?'

'I was going to say that if we can persuade her to dine with us it would be a great pleasure, and perhaps be a useful change for her.'

'I dare say it will; try and persuade her. Poor girl! it was an evil hour for her when she fell in with me!'

'Do not say so. You may make her happy, be happy yourself yet. Do not lose heart, Reginald.'

He made a slight despairing gesture, and after a moment's silence said, 'Be sure you bring those letters with you, Laura. I only want to read them,' he added hastily.

'You may take them with you to read,' said Laura, colouring with pity for the self-abasement that suggested the assurance. 'You cannot think I would guard against *you* as against an enemy?'

'You had better,' he said hastily. 'I cannot answer for myself.'

Further speech was prevented by the announcement in loud tones by one of the waiters—

'Mrs. Crewe!' Whereupon that lady entered smiling and serene in the consciousness of being well dressed, in her best dress, bonnet, and mantle.

Reginald summoned sufficient self-control to greet her cheerfully, and she greatly enjoyed the ensuing hour of condolence, sympathy, and cross-examination. Finally she was made quite happy by Winnie's ready acceptance of her invitation to dinner, and carried

her off to spend a tranquil afternoon which soothed and strengthened the sorrowing young mother.

The following morning Laura sallied forth, feeling as we may suppose men feel who volunteer for a 'forlorn hope' or any other desperate undertaking; yet she nerved herself to pay a visit to her first patron, from whom a fresh commission awaited her on her return from Paris, on her way to Charing Cross.

Reginald was loitering at the bookstall when she entered the crowded station. When he turned at her greeting he looked curiously at her for a moment; then led the way into the hotel and asked for a private room, to which they were shown.

'Bring me pen and ink, and some brandy and soda,' he said to the waiter. 'Will you not take something to eat, Laura?' he continued.

'I am too anxious and distressed to eat.'

'You are wonderfully changed,' said Reginald, leaning on the back of a chair, and looking at her with calm scrutiny. 'It struck me with new force when I met you just now; there is a quiet power and composed manner about you quite different from your old shy coldness. Ah! there is no use in looking back. Have you brought the letters, and other documents? Let us get to the bottom of this infernal business as soon as we can.'

'They are all here,' returned Laura, drawing out the packet. 'First, here is Holden's letter, and the few lines which accompanied it and announced his death. The note mentioned as enclosed I gave up when I got the packet described; the rest are the papers it contained.'

As Reginald perused the lines traced by Holden's dying hand, Laura observed how his grasp on the paper tightened, and his pale cheek flushed and then grew white. She felt herself trembling with the terrible internal tremor of irresistible emotion.

It was a horrible experience to sit there, and watch the man she had once passionately loved thus reading his own condemnation.

Holden's letter finished, Reginald laid it down silently, and, shading his eyes for a moment with his hand, took up the next paper presented to him, the short explanation appended to the documents deposited at Winter's; and so read on through the whole, a paleness spreading over his face, but retaining a degree of hard composure.

'The evidence is very complete,' he said, somewhat huskily. 'How did you get possession of these papers?'

'I went alone to this Mr. Winter, and he gave them to me on payment of a fee.'

'Then, he made no difficulty about giving them up?'

'Not the least.'

'Which proves that Holden kept counsel; otherwise a kindred spirit and chum of such a fellow would have been making terms with me before Holden was half-way to Australia. I begin to hope the secret is between us alone; that is the best in a bad business.'

'And with me you are safe,' said Laura in a low tone.

'I believe it,' returned Reginald, and walked once to and fro in silence. 'Laura,' he then broke out hurriedly, in a changed voice, 'I do not want to whine and cry "*Peccavi!*" I know how I must seem in your eyes! I can never right myself with *you*; but I want to say, I *must* say, how impossible it is for *you*, a calm-natured, untried woman, to know the bitterness of having *such* fortune within my grasp and seeing it wrenched away! That beggar Holden always hated me, I don't know why; I scarcely felt his existence; but if I hadn't been such an infernal idiot as to leave the Pierslynn pedigree with West to show him the day my wonderful luck first dawned on me, he would never have dreamed of any connection between me and the Geoffrey Piers whose history was known to his aunt. When the facts stared me in the face, I felt I could *not* give up Pierslynn. Look here, Laura! No one knew it, but ever since my boyhood I had dreamed of inheriting the family estate. I had silently watched for Hugh Piers' marriage, and every year that saw him still unwedded, added a pebble to the cairn of my hopes; and although I was man enough to keep quiet and seem reasonable, I was in the wildest fever of mad joy when I read of the poor fellow having broken his neck. I had had the character of being a light-hearted, easy-going fellow. I am *not*! I am proud and luxurious and passionate, and I hated my life. When I found that Captain Edward Piers, *your* father, was legitimate, I resolved to secure myself by marrying you, as I told Holden I would. I did not want to rob you quite; I liked you well enough, better in fact than any girl I knew, for I had never been what is called in love—I mean real wild sort of love; and although I should have preferred social rank, I was not at all averse to a home with you, and you loved me, Laura; you scarcely knew it, but you always loved me! Why were you so obstinate in delaying our marriage? All, all might have been well. Once your husband, I should have got over my frantic passion for Winnie, you would have been wise and good. Remember,' he went on with cynical frankness, 'I do not say I should have been a model of fidelity, but you would have been my prime counsellor and best friend. *Why* did you not marry me, Laura?'

'Because, I suppose, you were to be saved from the crime of

breaking my heart and Winnie's,' said Laura severely. 'I do not think you are aware what depths of selfishness you are displaying!'

'Am I?' he returned indifferently. 'Well, I shall say no more about myself. But by Heaven I did not intend to rob you! I meant you to be Mrs. Piers, of Pierslynn, surrounded by all that could make life pleasant, and a moment of infernal madness, my cursed ill-luck, betrayed me! However, it is useless to try back; let us see what conclusion we can come to.'

He sat down at the table, and drawing out the paper Laura had given him before leaving Paris, unfolded it, and seemed to read the lines for a minute or two in silence.

'Your plan is ingenious,' he said at last, 'and generous. You propose to place all these papers in my hands, and to let me account for their possession as best I can, leaving it to me to announce the discovery of your rights and so pass before the world as a just and honourable man.' He smiled bitterly. 'I would certainly come clean out of the affair. I ought to jump at it. But, Laura, you are not an ambitious woman. You are not avaricious. Could we not hush up the business in some other way? You love my wife, and would not like to push her from her place. Can you not leave me—us—Pierslynn for my life? I would agree to give you a handsome income, and should you ever marry and have children I would secure the succession to the estate to them. I am encouraged to propose this by my knowledge of the extreme simplicity of your tastes, the noble disinterestedness of your nature. Wealth and station *cannot* have the value for *you* they have for *me*! Laura! for the sake of "auld lang syne," for our old friendship's sake, do not be too hard upon me!'

Reginald stretched out his hand suddenly and grasped hers hard as he ceased to speak, gazing at her eagerly. She felt a strange mixture of compassion and contempt. That he should degrade himself by such a speech seemed incredible; was all the wealth of England worth such a basement?

'I am not hard on you, Reginald,' she said sadly, as she withdrew her hand. 'I wish to spare you, but *I will* have my rights! You have not thought of what you suggest! Suppose God gives you other children? How cruel it would be to bring them up in expectation of an inheritance that could never be theirs, and how could I account for receiving an income from you, on whom I have no claim? Do you not think such an arrangement would point suspicion on your honour and on mine?'

Reginald sprang from his seat and walked to and fro restlessly. 'But, Laura,' he exclaimed, resuming his chair again, 'if these

cursed lawyers get their fingers into the caldron they will stir up all kinds of mischief! They will tell you, you can claim all the money I have spent since I held the estate; they will want to know what I have done with it; and, Laura, I must *not* have that question raised!’

‘Can you not trust me, Reginald? Do you think I would really injure you? Do you think I would ask for any of the money I fear you have squandered? Be a man, Reginald! put the past away from you, lay hold of the future—you have that in you to win a place yet, as good as what you—lose now; but I am resolved to prove my father’s legitimacy, my own claims, and—you are in my hands.’

She spoke low, but with indescribable force and distinctness, with a flash of spirit, of unconscious command that startled her cousin as a revelation. He rested his elbows on the table, and covered his face with his hands. When he looked up, there was a sullen, beaten look in his face that made Laura’s heart ache.

‘As you will,’ he said in a low tone, and paused again. ‘Now to settle how we shall carry out this tragi-comedy. I shall take these letters (if you will trust them with me), and say I found them among old papers belonging to John Piers, the late man’s father. It so happens there are several letters from Geoffrey Piers, your grandfather, respecting his son. One tells of his removal from Llanogwen to a school near London; another describes his having had a severe attack of fever; and the third, in 1831, when he must have been ten or eleven, entreats the friendly protection of the head of the family for his poor solitary boy who would soon be an orphan, as he (the writer) feels his end approaching. By putting all together in the same old yellow envelope, no one will suspect that all were not originally wrapped up together.’

‘That will do admirably!’ exclaimed Laura. ‘What will your next step be?’

‘I suppose the correct thing will be to go in a state of agitation to my solicitors; they will probably communicate with you and propose a compromise; but I think it will be well to inform you myself, in a burst of cousinly confidence, this is for further consideration.’

He paused; and Laura, not knowing very well what to say, employed herself in folding up her grandmother’s letters and the memoir of Deborah Pryce, carefully returning Holden’s to her pocket. Reginald laughed bitterly as he received the former, and said, ‘You have still evidence enough there to send me to penal servitude. Look here, Laura! can you wait a month for the assertion of your rights? because I want to get Christmas over.

My mother wishes us to stay with her; and—and—my poor mother! to come back to the narrow life she thought she had escaped for ever!’

Again he covered his face.

‘Reginald,’ cried Laura, ‘she shall suffer no pecuniary loss, I promise that; as to the rest, take your own time. One point more: for God’s sake let no cloud come between you and your wife! she loves you so much. Cast away every thought that can draw you from her. Is she not tender and good, bright, companionable?’

‘She *is*! She is lovely and lovable, pure, true; but God, Laura! you do not know the magic there is about a clever, unscrupulous, subtle woman, who fears nothing, and knows everything, and is always ready to put that knowledge to the best account to amuse, to pique, or soothe the man who interests her, either as a tyrant or victim. With the help of such a witch as this, not even *you*, Laura, would have wrenched Pierslynn from me. No *good* woman ever fascinates as such a siren does, at least a man of my nature!’

‘Ah! is there then no place in your heart for Winnie—dearest, sweetest Winnie, whom you sought so eagerly and——’

Laura burst into tears.

Reginald looked at her surprised. ‘This is a curious situation,’ he said coldly. ‘My old love entreating me to love the woman who supplanted her!’

Laura, who was overstrained and exhausted, still sobbed.

‘Don’t!’ exclaimed Reginald at last; ‘I cannot stand tears, and I *do* love Winnie! I was always happy with her when we were alone together. I love her a deuced deal more than half the married men in England love their wives! Now, we have not much more to say; only, before we part, tell me to whom *you* are engaged?’

‘Engaged!’ repeated Laura, astonished; ‘what induces you to think I am engaged?’

‘Your regard for your rights! If you had not some other interest beyond your own to care for, you would not have held out so stoutly.’

‘You are mistaken,’ returned Laura, startled into composure, while her cheek glowed and the tears still hung on her eyelashes. ‘Under *any* circumstances I should have stood upon my rights—as a mere act of justice. I could not be party to a fraud.’

Reginald looked intently at her as she spoke, and in his turn flushed, but grew pale quickly. In spite of Laura’s effort to be steady, her eyes sank under his.



'You have not really answered my question. Laura, tell me who it is you are going to marry. I am convinced you are engaged. There are, to my mind, a thousand indefinable indications in your countenance, your bearing; *who* is the man, Laura?'

'If I am engaged, Reginald, it cannot concern you.'

'It does!' he exclaimed fiercely. 'The secret of my life will soon be at the mercy of a stranger, a natural enemy.'

'It will not, I solemnly promise, Reginald; not even to a husband, if I ever have one, will I betray you.'

Reginald paced the room rapidly, an expression of despair and rage in his face.

'I know what such promises are worth,' he growled between his teeth; then suddenly stopping opposite to her he exclaimed in a high strained voice:

'By Heaven, Laura! you are going to marry that sailor fellow, Crewe!'

'Why do you think so?' she asked.

'I cannot tell, but I know it. God! to be at *his* mercy. Probably he already knows his *fiancée* is a wealthy heiress.'

'Yes,' said Laura, gathering courage. 'I *have* promised Denzil Crewe to be his wife; but he has chosen me as I was—plain, insignificant, *poor*. He has not the faintest idea of what I know; and, believe me, he *never* shall have. Your reputation is as dear to me as though you were my brother. You cannot know *how* I shrink from exposing you! Trust me, Reginald; you *must* trust me!'

'I have no choice,' he said gloomily. 'But of what value is life to me now? Would it not be wiser to end this wretched tangle! Laura, you have been my ruin! Had you married me at once, all would have gone well;' and he again paced the room like a wild animal. 'What is life to me?'

'Much,' said Laura, somewhat alarmed, but venturing to catch his arm. 'The future may be yours if you will. Your life belongs to Winnie. Banish the past from your mind; act in the living present. If you manage well, not a suspicion will attach to you. Reginald, you will atone to me for *everything* if you will take up the broken thread of your career, and make a place for yourself, as you can if you choose.'

Reginald flung away from her and threw himself into a chair. A few minutes' silence ensued.

Then rising, he said in an altered voice: 'Come, there is no more to be done. You give me till the new year to make my arrangements? Winifrid remains with my mother; I shall come

to and fro, and will find an opportunity to get those letters from you at the last moment. It is as well you keep them now.'

He rang vehemently for the waiter, and continued :

'You had better leave without me ; and, Laura, I am not ungrateful. You have been generous : we can never be enemies, but I would never willingly meet you again. Give me your hand, and—remember, I was sorely tempted.'

'Good-bye, Reginald. Do not despair—and—keep your heart warm with love for your best friend—your wife.'

## CHAPTER XLIX.

THE weeks which ensued would have been very pleasant to Laura but for the *dénouement* hanging over her.

She saw Winnie frequently, and Reginald scarcely at all. But she was gratified by observing that the former seemed more tranquil and content ; she looked better and fresher, and appeared to be on more friendly and confidential terms with her mother-in-law than formerly.

Winnie, always kindly, real, true, was a frequent visitor in Leamington Road, and was ere long entirely restored to the Admiral's favour, while she became A 1 in Mrs. Crewe's estimation. Reginald revolved between Pierslynn and London, and no hint of the Polish Princess disturbed the smooth surface of their lives.

Meanwhile letters from Denzil cheered the hearts of his mother and his *fiancée*. It was Laura's first love-letter, and, although a rational production, its tone of deep tenderness, the details of his daily life poured out with the confidence fond affection alone can create, made her heart swell with pride and joy.

He was but a few days arrived when he wrote ; yet he had already time to gather that although he found matters in a bad state, they were less complicated than he expected. He therefore hoped to finish his work in about six months, as his longing to return to the home he knew awaited him grew more intense the farther he went from it.

This letter made Laura burn to tell him all the events of the past six weeks, but she resolutely resisted the wish. She would never betray Reginald to a man who had always, in her opinion, undervalued him ; the name and fame of her old love were precious deposits that should never be breathed upon if she could help it. As Winnie's husband, too, he was if possible to be preserved, and lifted over the chasm which had suddenly opened under his feet.

One cold rainy afternoon in the first week of the new year, Laura, on returning from her morning's walk, was greeted by Mrs. Crewe with the news that 'Mr. Piers was closeted with the Admiral; and mark my words, Laura, something extraordinary has happened! That poor young man had quite a scared look.'

'Indeed!' said Laura, affecting to be occupied with her wet umbrella to avoid scrutiny. 'I will take off my hat, dear Mrs. Crewe, and join you immediately.'

Was *the* moment come? and if so, how would it all turn out? A strange sense of suffocation oppressed her—her heart beat fast—she did not know how to endure herself; she dreaded to go downstairs, yet she could not stay in the silence of her own chamber. She left it, and was overtaken at the foot of the stairs by the Admiral and Reginald, both looking grave and disturbed.

The latter shook hands with her silently, and turning to the Admiral said, 'I leave it to you, my dear sir, to communicate this extraordinary discovery to Laura, and I leave myself in your and her hands without fear.'

'You can with every confidence; and may the good God guide us for the best!' returned the Admiral solemnly.

'The matter will soon be public, there is no need for secrecy,' rejoined Reginald; and, shaking hands with the Admiral, he hastily left the house.

The Admiral looked after him for a moment; then, taking Laura's hand, said impressively, 'I have a strange tale to tell you, my dear; come into the dining-room. Our good friend Mrs. Crewe has a right to hear it also.'

It had come then at last!

Laura, trembling in every limb, followed her guardian, and Mrs. Crewe, who had caught the words 'strange tale,' was metaphorically standing on the tiptoe of expectation.

'Do sit down, my dear sir, and tell us all about it. You know if any one is safe, *I* am.'

The Admiral did not heed her; he stood by the fire holding Laura's hand in both his own.

'My dear child, it has pleased God to send you a great, a totally unforeseen change of fortunes. Your cousin Reginald has just now told me that in looking carefully through his predecessor's papers, a task he had too long postponed, he came upon a packet labelled 'Geoffrey Piers' letters,' within which was a second parcel carefully sealed. On examination it proved to contain the certificate of your grandfather's marriage, some letters describing that event, written by your grandmother, and some other letters and papers, which prove, Reginald says, beyond a doubt,

that you are the real heir of the Pierslynn estate, as you descend from the elder brother of Reginald's grandfather. This of course, if all turns out as he anticipates, will bring a terrible reverse upon your relatives; but Reginald, with the decision of an honest man and a true gentleman, lost no time in laying the documents before his solicitors, who yesterday examined the register of the church (somewhere in the City) where the marriage is stated to have taken place, and there they found an entry corresponding to the certificate. Your father is thus proved legitimate. It requires but a few formalities, therefore, to establish your claim.' .

He stopped; and Laura, trembling almost visibly, could hardly utter the words, 'This seems incredible. I feel terrified at so extraordinary a reverse.'

But Mrs. Crewe could not restrain her excitement.

'*Laura* the owner of Pierslynn! *Laura* the real head of the family! the ways of Providence are past finding out. Why, my dear Admiral, no romance in Mudie's Library can equal this. And will the house and grounds, the carriages and the horses, the—the pictures and the family jewels, all belong to *Laura*? I do not seem able to believe it;' and Mrs. Crewe rose from her seat and went to put all the antimacassars straight as a sort of outlet to her emotion.

'I can hardly believe it myself,' said the Admiral, still holding *Laura's* hand and looking with some anxiety into her pale agitated face. 'I am by no means sure how we ought to feel in these strange circumstances. It is a sore trial to *Laura*, it is a terrible blow to Reginald Piers. Let us keep our minds calm and anticipate as little as possible. Messrs. Greenwood and Mr. Piers' solicitors have sent down an agent to the village in Wales where your father was born to ascertain if his birth is registered there, and how. Meantime, the deepest source of regret and anxiety to Mr. Piers is that he has spent so much of *your* money, as he calls it. Not only three years' income, but a large amount of his predecessor's savings. This is but natural.'

'I am sure, if this strange story proves true, he need not distress himself about what he has spent. I will never trouble him,' cried *Laura*.

'So I ventured to assure him,' said the Admiral gravely, as he drew forward a chair for her. 'Such unconscious appropriation carries with it neither guilt nor blame.'

'I suppose not,' said Mrs. Crewe, returning to the fireplace and gazing with a profound air at the comfortable blaze; 'but, though I say it myself, I can see a little more below the surface than

many, and it seems to me very extraordinary: first Mr. Piers' tremendous haste to marry our dear Laura here, then the breaking of the engagement, then this discovery. You see, if he *had* married you, Laura, he would have still been master of Pierslynn, whatever happened.'

'Oh, Mrs. Crewe!' interrupted Laura in a tone of genuine horror, for the suggestion terrified her.

'My dear Mrs. Crewe,' said the Admiral with some severity, 'you should not permit yourself even to think so uncharitably, and I must add unjustly. It was entirely in this man's power to suppress and destroy the evidence which robs him of his fortune. When he discovered these documents he was alone with his own conscience, visible only to the All-Seeing of whose presence I fear he is but little mindful. Had he burned these papers he would never have been found out, as no suspicion seems to have existed that Geoffrey Piers ever married the girl who was Laura's grandmother; in short, and even to a man of principle, there was a certain degree of temptation in such a moment. Reginald has surmounted it. I trust for all our sakes, Mrs. Crewe, you will abstain from such thoughts and expressions.'

'You must know, my dear sir, that your wish is law to me,' returned that lady unabashed. 'I do not intend to express myself to the same effect again; but not being as good and holy as you are, or as high-minded as our dear Laura, though I should scorn a mean action, I am perhaps a better judge of worldly matters than either of you. However, be my opinions what they may, I shall keep them to myself.'

'To your opinions, dear Mrs. Crewe, you have every right, only pray be careful in forming them;' then turning to Laura, the Admiral continued: 'Your cousin recommends that you should put yourself in the hands of Messrs. Thurston and Trent, as it is right they should prosecute inquiries and see that everything is properly and legally carried out. I therefore propose to accompany you to their office to-morrow morning. Till then let us try and divert our thoughts somewhat, for I cannot yet quite believe that Reginald's rights can be upset. If any doubt remains he says he will defend them.'

'He ought,' said Laura thoughtfully. 'Are there not sometimes amicable suits where both parties are simply anxious to ascertain the truth?'

'I suppose there must be,' returned the Admiral.

'I will go away to my own room,' said Laura. 'I feel as if I must be alone; I am overpowered by the sudden strangeness of my position!'

'God bless and guide you, my dear Laura!' said the Admiral, laying his hand on her head as she passed him.

'Would you take a glass of wine, and then lie down and try to sleep?' asked Mrs. Crewe anxiously, as if she had met with an accident.

'I want nothing but a little quiet thought,' returned Laura; and then with a sudden impulse she threw her arms round the kind woman's neck and kissed her affectionately as she left the room.

The rest of the day was curiously constrained and oppressive. The Admiral having advised avoidance of the subject uppermost in their thoughts, conversation proceeded intermittently, and the hours seemed to Laura preternaturally long. She was in some ways relieved to think that the first much-dreaded steps had been taken towards righting the foul wrong to which she had been subjected, yet she was terrified at being launched upon the rapids of such a startling course. Moreover the sense of playing a part weakened her courage. She was especially desirous that all things should seem so clear and natural that Denzil's suspicions might not be roused.

'My dear,' said Mrs. Crewe, as they went upstairs at night, 'I feel as if I should burst. Do let me come in and talk to you.'

'Yes, certainly, come in,' returned Laura, opening the door and lighting the candles on the dressing-table.

'To think of it all is too astonishing,' continued Mrs. Crewe, sitting down on a smart ottoman which was really a bonnet-box.

Laura took a low cane chair and resigned herself to listen while Mrs. Crewe proceeded to remove her lace cravat and fold it up with mechanical, unconscious care as she spoke.

'To think of you, who were in a manner of speaking pooh-poohed and snubbed, and made little of, being head over them all! That poor conceited set-up Mrs. Piers, the dowager as she liked to be called, as if she were a duchess! I really *am* sorry for her! Won't she be ready to cut her tongue out for having refused to receive *you* for a daughter-in-law! She is incapable of seeing your worth as *I* did, and was glad to welcome you without a farthing! Well; it's not every heiress that knows she was chosen for herself alone, as you know my dear blessed boy chose you; and when I say, Laura Piers, you deserve him,' added the mother, with a little sob, 'I give you the highest praise you will ever get, be the other what it may.'

'I think you do,' said Laura, drawing nearer and taking Mrs. Crewe's hand, which she stroked gently.

'Never forget that he chose you out of pure disinterested love,' continued Mrs. Crewe emphatically, 'and he does love you, my dear, with all his heart! I saw that before you did. I wish he were here to advise and support you in the present extraordinary crisis. What do you think, my love? shall he have to take your name?'

'I know as little as yourself, Mrs. Crewe. I should much prefer to take his.'

'And you are right, Laura,' she returned with grave emphasis as she unpinned her cap and set it on her knee, where it produced an uncanny effect as if she were holding a supplementary head.

'The Crewes are a good old family, though not in the peerage, and a truer gentleman than my dear boy never came of any stock, though adverse circumstances compelled him to enter the mercantile marine. Well, well, good luck comes to him at last! He gets a dear good wife and a fortune into the bargain, for I feel sure, my love, nothing will make you break a promise once given!'

'I hope not,' said Laura, with a faint smile, for she saw the drift of her kind friend's conversation. 'Nothing save Denzil's own wish would induce me to break with him.'

'And there is small danger of that!' cried Mrs. Crewe, kissing her with warmth. 'But, my dear! What will Mrs. Reginald Piers say? It will be an awful trial to her. I hope and trust she will keep friends with *you*, and not run away with the idea that you ought not to assert your rights and all that sort of thing!'

'I do not fear it,' replied Laura thoughtfully. 'She has too much sense;' but even while she spoke a dim fear arose in her heart and chilled it.

'I am not so sure,' said Mrs. Crewe. 'We are seldom just or reasonable about those we love, as she loves her husband. Depend upon it she will be awfully cut up at the idea of his loss and mortification, for, though he carried it off with frank carelessness, he was tremendously proud of Pierslynn and his position. I changed *my* opinion of Reginald Piers a good deal lately, and in spite of what the Admiral says I think the whole affair very strange—very strange indeed.'

'It does not seem so to me,' said Laura, 'at least in the sense you mean. But it is impossible that Winifrid and I should fail to understand each other; and, after all, our speculations may be quite fruitless. Some fresh discovery, some new combination of circumstances, may occur to sweep away my pretensions; let us not dwell upon them.'

'That is not at all likely. I consider your claim indisputable. I wonder if Mr. Piers has got through much of the savings! I

believe there was a considerable sum in hand. Do you think, dear, you will have a town as well as a country house ?'

'Oh, Mrs. Crewe !' said Laura, laughing in spite of the anxiety and trepidation which oppressed her. 'Such a question never occurred to me. Indeed, I feel too much for Reginald and Winnie to think how the change will affect myself.'

'Very pretty and praiseworthy indeed, my dear. But—listen ; there's Topsy crying to be let in. It is a wet night. What an intelligent creature she is, to be sure ! I'm coming, my precious puss, I'm coming. Good-night, dearest Laura. I have kept you too long out of your bed.'

The interview with Messrs. Thurston and Trent (for both partners shared the important consultation) was a severe trial to Laura.

The surprise of both gentlemen was very great ; indeed, it was several minutes before even Mr. Trent's keen faculties could assimilate the facts reported. 'These succession cases are often very extraordinary, and few can surpass the present one if matters turn out as you seem to think they will,' he said.

'Very remarkable—very, indeed,' observed Mr. Thurston, playing with his eye-glass ; 'awkward discovery for a man to make ; yet after all perhaps less mortifying than to have it made by another. At any rate it puts Mr. Piers' reputation beyond a shadow of doubt.'

'Yes,' returned Mr. Trent, tapping the table thoughtfully with a paper-knife. 'He acted as any honourable man would. Of course I am glad enough of your good fortune,' to Laura. 'But, at the same time, I feel sincerely for Reginald Piers. It is a tremendous blow.'

'You must direct me how best to soften it to him,' said Laura in a low voice, feeling strangely guilty, and perceiving clearly enough that with the usual masculine *esprit de corps* the partners thought it a deplorable freak of fortune that a fine estate should pass from the hands of a capable man to those of a woman, and a plain, quiet, unremarkable woman to boot.

'Of course we shall be happy to manage the case for Miss Piers. Admiral, the sooner so important a matter is settled the better. I will call on Greenwood this afternoon, and ask to see the papers. There is no use in making any plans or suggestions till we ascertain how you really stand, Miss Piers. It is really a curious affair, very curious. I shall let you know the result of our conference to-morrow morning.'

'This will be a startling piece of news for my wife,' said Mr.



Trent, as he escorted the Admiral and Laura downstairs. 'She is in Dresden with our youngest boy and girl, as you know, for the winter. She was asking about you in her last letter. They do not return till April.'

'My best regards to her,' said Laura. 'I shall be glad to see her again.'

After a few more words, Laura and her guardian bade Mr. Trent good-morning and walked away homewards.

'Well, I confess I am confoundedly sorry at this discovery,' said Trent to Thurston. 'Just as Piers was preparing to stand for his county and settle down into an active country gentleman.'

'He has not been very steady to the country as yet,' replied the other drily. 'He was always running abroad and hither and thither.'

'What an unlucky slip it was for him to have let his engagement with this girl fall through! Of course we thought him a fool then, and I must say as far as beauty goes he has changed for the better.'

'Yes,' said Mr. Thurston, 'perhaps; but I find Miss Piers a very interesting young woman.'

'She will be extremely interesting to many now,' replied Mr. Trent. 'I doubt if this fortune will be a real gain to her; some sharper will marry her for her money.'

'We must hope for better things,' rejoined his partner, as Mr. Trent closed his blotting-book and prepared to go out.

## CHAPTER L.

It was still early when Laura reached home.

She felt utterly uncomfortable and at sea. She could not settle to any of her usual occupations. Her whole life was upset. The lines of her existence would need to be laid down afresh on a broader gauge. One question she revolved anxiously in her own mind: should she write at once to Denzil, or wait to impart the great news until he returned home?

Her great longing to see him, to have the comfort and support of his presence and counsel, inclined her to write without delay, and on this she finally decided.

But looking into her heart, she found, that first disturbed uneasy day, that the source of her discomfort was the fear of finding Winnie changed towards her, and misunderstanding her. She hesitated to go and see her, for she shrank from meeting old Mrs.

Piers, as she did not know if her son had yet announced his unfortunate discovery.

The promised report from Mr. Trent did not reach his new client till the evening but one after her visit to him, and then he merely said that the proofs of her claim seemed most satisfactory, but that he was sending down an agent to examine the baptismal registry in the church of Llanogwen. On the return of this *employé*, Mr. Trent would like to see her again.

The day following the receipt of this note, Laura was writing a long letter to Denzil in her own room, intending to finish it after her next interview with Mr. Trent, if matters then seemed conclusive.

A tap on the door disturbed her. In reply to her invitation 'Come in,' the door opened to admit Winifrid.

She looked pale, and her large eyes had a distressed alarmed expression.

'Dearest Winnie! how rejoiced I am to see you!' cried Laura, holding out her arms to embrace her. 'I have wanted so much to come to you.'

'Ah, Laura!' said Winifrid, her lips quivering, 'what is all this that Reginald has been telling me?'

'What has he told you?' was Laura's counter-question as she drew her cousin to a chair and placed herself beside her.

'Oh, I can hardly believe it!' cried Winifrid. 'That Pierslynn is yours; and all—all that we possess: that Reginald has been unconsciously keeping you out of your own; and now he must give up all to you. Laura, dear Laura, it is not that I would rob you or wrong you; but, oh! I feel it is hard, desperately hard, on Reginald. I am sure, if you had only yourself to think of, you might—— But I do not know what I am saying; you see, Reggie has nothing in the world he can call his own, yet he has been so luxurious in his ways, and I am of so little use to him. Oh, Laura! what can I do to help him?'

'Dearest Winnie, do not cry or make yourself miserable. Do you think I could be happy, and know that you and Reginald wanted for anything? Let us take counsel together, dear, and settle what will be best for you. I cannot help asserting my own rights. It is inevitable. Reginald could not consent to retain Pierslynn at my pleasure. He can, he will, make a place for himself. He will yet be in a better position than he has yet filled, and he will be more your own.'

'He has been all that I can wish in his hour of trial,' sobbed Winnie. 'So noble, so just to you; and all I ask, is to be of use and comfort to him. But he is awfully cast down. Neither of us

knows how to break the terrible news to his poor mother. It will kill her.'

'Believe me she shall not suffer,' said Laura. 'I have determined she shall lose nothing by her son's change of fortunes; my first care shall be to secure independence to her and to you.'

'I am sure you will be kind and generous; but, Laura, it is very bitter to "give up," even to you!' and Winnie shed some irresistible tears. 'For myself I do not care. Indeed, indeed, I do not; wealth and grandeur brought me nothing but trouble. But to see *him* so pale and still and downcast, is terrible. Yet I have had some moments of exquisite delight. Last night, when he told me all, he laid his head upon my shoulder and said, "But I have *you* left, and you will always be the same, tender and true." So you see he must love me best of all! Then, Laura, I may assure him that you will not forsake him—that you will not rob him of everything?'

'No, my own dear cousin; I will be just, and it is only justice in me to take care of your future,' returned Laura, observing with a certain kindly cynicism how completely the idea of Reginald, his losses, his trouble and suffering, swallowed up every other idea; even she herself was utterly overlooked; only, thank God, there was no bitterness or resentment in Winnie's simple heart against *her*.

'I am sure, I was always sure, you are kind and just,' returned Winnie with a little quivering sob.

'Winnie, dear,' said Laura, anxious to change her thoughts, 'try and find out what Reginald would like to do, and where he would like to live, and so soon as matters are settled and I have some command of money, we must look out a nice home for you. I cannot be happy till I know you are comfortable.'

'You *are* good and kind, Laura! Oh, do help me to keep Reginald in London! He said something last night of hiding ourselves on the Continent, but I do not want that! I know what it means—annihilation for an Englishman, and worse for *us*. Oh, Laura! how old Mrs. Piers will rage, to think that she prevented Reginald's marriage with you!'

'I am sure no one else regrets it now,' returned Laura with a smile.

'I feel more comforted,' said Winnie presently; 'I wish dear Reginald did not look so despondent. Shall I ask him to come and talk to you, Laura? I am sure you would do him good.'

'No, dear Winnie; situated as we both are, I think you had better leave him to himself. However, assure him from me that I am his true friend.'

After a short silence Laura, to divert her listener's mind, confided to her that she was engaged to Denzil Crewe, a piece of news which roused Winifrid's interest. She was greatly astonished, for her imagination always depicted Denzil as mourning the loss of herself. She was kindly and sympathetic, however, and full of all good wishes. But the dominant thought was of the strange freak by which Pierslynn and Laura would pass into Denzil's hands.

'And Mrs. Crewe! What a state of excitement she must be in! Oh! I cannot meet her to-day, Laura! I am not strong enough.'

'You need not, dear; she is out.'

'And I will go before she returns.'

'Let me know when you have broken the news to Mrs. Piers,' were Laura's last words as Winnie kissed her warmly and went quickly away.

The ensuing weeks were crowded with business visits and consultations at Messrs. Thurston and Trent's office, perusals of leases and examinations of accounts, discussions of plans and preparing of deeds. All the forms and technicalities of law seemed to spread their tentacles round Laura and her guardian. Yet no obstacle presented itself to her quietly taking possession of her property.

Meantime Parliament met, and the world of Mayfair had a few days' pleasant excitement over the Pierslynn romance. The society papers gave it a paragraph or two, and then a fresher topic drove it from the field.

Laura's provision for her disinherited kinsman satisfied the lawyers on both sides; and Reginald, as he gradually realised how wonderfully he had been saved from the effects of his own dishonesty, began to pluck up courage and cheerfulness.

Laura and Winnie found ample and interesting occupation in seeking a house, as Reginald consented to reside in London, though he was somewhat slow in forming, or avowedly forming, his plans. So time went quickly on.

The greatest sufferer was Mrs. Piers. Her pride was deeply wounded, for she had always cherished a species of dislike to Laura, born of pique and resentment at the indescribable superiority which she most unconsciously maintained, in spite of Reginald's desertion and her own position as a poor relation.

To have this offshoot of the family put over her son's head—in his place—filling the eye of the country, which had hitherto been fixed on him, was too much. Not even the generous readiness with which Laura secured to her for life the same income her son had settled on her could atone to her for the infamous usurpation.

as she considered such an unfortunate exception to the ordinary rule of succession in the male line. Her mental sufferings culminated in a bad bilious attack which afforded anything but agreeable occupation to Winnie, who was her kind nurse.

From the time Laura had written a full account of the events here recorded to Denzil Crewe, she was intensely anxious for his return. Her own plans must all remain in abeyance until she could consult with him.

The Admiral, perceiving this, sought an interview with the head of the house to which Denzil had been lately admitted a partner, and ascertained that there was no pressing need to prolong his stay. Moreover, when informed of the fortune awaiting his junior, the 'worthy principal' rapidly advanced from civility to cordiality—declared he would write by the post which left next day, and exhort Mr. Crewe to return as soon as possible; and hoped that he would not desert the firm.

Meantime Laura looked eagerly for a reply to her letters written early in January. The great trial of distance is the length of time which must elapse before an answer can be received, while the chances and changes of this mortal life go on ever accumulating, till the answer, when received, is almost too old to be applicable. How often Laura calculated that March would be in its first decade before her long report could be in Denzil's hands; and before his reply could possibly reach her, the last of the spring months would be half-way through. Surely his next letter would announce his coming!

Laura would not hear of taking personal possession of her house and lands. 'Let time accustom people to the change of owners,' she said, 'and then I will slide into my place.'

So she lived on in the same simple fashion as before her accession of fortune, and time rolled swiftly on.

May was past its prime, still no letter had reached Laura. The China mail was a couple of days overdue, and she suppressed as much as was in her power the uneasiness and dread that gnawed at her heart. Mrs. Crewe was less restless; all the future was bathed in sunshine to her, and she had gone one evening at this time with much pride and delight to the opera, for which Laura had procured two stalls, and begged Mrs. Crewe to let her stay at home, and to take Miss Brown in her place. Mrs. Crewe has started triumphantly in the congenial character of a patroness.

The Admiral had retired to his own room to proceed with a work he had lately undertaken, chiefly for Laura and Mrs. Crewe's benefit, a sort of commentary or explanation of the 11th chapter

of Revelation, for which he was under the impression special light and guidance had been vouchsafed him.

Laura had taken refuge in her painting-room, and began half mechanically to work at the picture of 'Sunset on the Beach,' which she had never finished, but which was inseparably associated with the happy day when she had sketched it. It was a labour of love to touch and retouch it, while she lived over again in memory the few exquisitely happy hours that succeeded Denzil's avowal and their acknowledged engagement. That was indeed a pure unmixed joy, but the good of this sudden accession of fortune was doubtful.

And then she thought, would Denzil approve the measures she had taken? Would he be dissatisfied with her for thus acting on her own judgment without reference to him?

Yes, they were of one mind, one faith! She laid aside her palette as she thought thus, and sat down by the window, through which came the perfume of the many blossoms in Mr. Brown's carefully kept flower-beds. How often she had looked out upon those little garden plots on which her windows opened in bitterest despondency and self-distrust! even now she rejoiced with trembling; for how could she tell what the future had yet behind its mysterious curtain! So she wandered into dreamland, forgetful of the present, and deaf to a confused murmur and stir which by-and-by arose from below.

A sudden sharp knock recalled her to herself. Almost before she could say 'Come in,' the door flew open and Denzil stood on the threshold—Denzil, browner and thinner than he was when they parted. An instant's breathless pause of astonished delight, and then she sprang forward and was locked in his warm loving embrace, silent from excess of feeling. While she clung to him, all reserve or coyness was swept away by the startling rapture of this sudden meeting—feeling that every doubt and difficulty was at an end now that *he* was present with her!

'At last, my love—my life!' said Denzil huskily, as she gently withdrew from his long passionate kiss. 'And I am dear and welcome to you?'

'Oh, *how* welcome!' cried Laura, struggling with the tears that would force themselves from her full heart. 'It *has* been weary waiting! When, how, did you come?'

'When I had your letter of January,' said Denzil, still holding her to him, 'I had already nearly finished my work, for I had pushed on as energetically as possible. I was devoured with eagerness to reach the home I knew was waiting for me, and there was not much left to settle; so, as the same mail brought me a very friendly communication from my partners, desiring me to return

as soon as possible, as they understood my private affairs required my presence, I determined to answer your letter in person. There were a few days to spare before the next mail went; I managed to start by it, reached Falmouth last night, and here I am.'

Then came a confused exchange of question and answer, and Laura eagerly poured out something of the load she had longed for him to share.

When they had somewhat calmed down, Denzil, after a short pause in their quick-flowing talk, exclaimed:

'For one circumstance I do especially thank Heaven. It is that you were pledged to me *before* this extraordinary discovery took place. I should have been barred from aspiring to the wealthy heiress; but *you* know, my darling, you were as rich a prize to me the day you put your hand in mine, as if you gave me the gold diggings of California with it. There is no need to explain this to you, yet I should not have liked to pose before the world as a fortune-hunter.'

'I should not have thought you one; what matter for the rest?' said Laura with a happy smile.

'Nevertheless, I am glad it is so,' said Denzil gravely. 'I am not at all pleased you have inherited this property, Laura.'

'I am not sure that I am either,' she returned.

'It is awful hard lines for Reginald Piers and that charming wife of his, and I am glad you have provided for them. But you and I would have got on very well; whereas, now I am bound to make even more money not to be overshadowed by my wife; yet I dare say we will manage not to interfere with each other or clash in any way. It is curious, and shows how unjust the prejudices of personal likes and dislikes make a man; but in my own mind I felt a little surprise that Reginald Piers, feeling himself safe, as he must have done, from every chance of detection, should have acted the honourable part he did.'

'Why should you have doubted him?' asked Laura carelessly, and passed to some other branch of the subject without waiting for a reply.

At last they remembered the Admiral, and repaired to his apartment to pay him a visit.

It was a night long to be remembered—the rapturous delight of Mrs. Crewe on finding her beloved boy ready to receive her on her return from the opera, the joyous supper, the pouring forth of accumulated information respecting the sayings and doings of the last eight or nine months, the boundless content in each other; while Collins, decked with the broadest grins of welcome,

waited on them assiduously, and Toppy, after careful inspection, jumped uninvited on Denzil's knee.

The Admiral said a special grace, full of such heartfelt gratitude and thankfulness that Mrs. Crewe was moved to tears.

Is it not well that, for a rare moment or two, life can wear so sweet and tender a smile for the toilers amid its rugged ways! that they may rest and be refreshed, to take up the burden again, to press onward and upward.

## CHAPTER LI.

MR. TRENT's comfortable house looked itself again. The drawing-room shutters were opened, the newspaper wrappings removed, the chandeliers freed from their imprisonment in holland bags, and in short 'Missus had come home.'

It had been according to his own account a purgatorial period to Mr. Trent, that winter of separation; but in point of fact the peas in his pilgrim's shoes had been boiled tolerably soft, and both he and his eldest boys found Christmas in Dresden a very pleasant variation from the ordinary festivities of that season in London. Mrs. Trent was not sorry to find herself in her luxurious home towards the end of June, ready to give and accept some dinner parties before the end of the season. She felt quite fresh after six or seven months' absence; and on the occasion about to be recorded she had arranged a peculiarly *recherché* little dinner for a party of twelve of her husband's more intimate acquaintances in the upper and middle strata of legal life.

Host, hostess, and guests were in excellent spirits; the service and the viands were equally good; all went smoothly. The first seriousness of eating over, the sharp edge of appetite blunted, conversation flowed freely and brightly; there were several excellent talkers present, and Mrs. Trent knew how to throw the ball. German politics had been ventilated *à propos* of Mrs. Trent's visit, the last remarkable trials were mentioned, curious items of intelligence concerning them discussed, *bons-mots* of counsel repeated and a few more perpetrated, and every one was pleased with himself and herself.

'That is a curious story about the Pierslynn property,' observed Mr. Watkins, a rising barrister. 'There have been paragraphs in most of the morning papers about it. Was not young Piers in your office, Trent?'

'Yes; he was articled to us, and was out of his time, but still working for the firm, when his cousin broke his neck and he stepped into the estate.'



'And now he has proved to be illegitimate, or some such thing,' said Mr. Blenkinsop, the well-known parliamentary solicitor.

'Not at all,' cried Mrs. B. 'Some relation, a poor girl who was employed by a milliner—they say, Madame Elise—turned out legitimate, and has a prior claim.'

'You are all wrong,' said Mrs. Trent, laughing; 'both parties happen to be relatives of mine, and as the story is to the credit of both I will tell you the facts.' And in her clear pleasant manner Mrs. Trent gave what might be termed the principal points of the case. 'Thus,' she concluded, 'the property has changed hands, with very little profit to the "gentlemen of the long robe," as the papers say.'

'Very hard on Piers,' growled Thornton, Q.C. 'Could he not get up a case of any kind?'

'Impossible,' returned Mr. Trent. 'He had no choice between destroying the documents and holding his tongue, or giving up his estate. He wisely chose the last, for dishonesty rarely pays; and Miss Piers, who is a very accomplished ladylike girl, has behaved exceedingly well; they had always been on friendly terms. She settles a thousand a year on him and his wife or the survivor of them, and has bought a house for them, also settled on the wife, while she gives Mrs. Piers senior the same income (five hundred a year) that her son allowed her; not promised merely, you know, but legally secured out of her own power or that of any husband to alter; and, what makes it more praiseworthy, Reginald Piers had managed, besides of course spending the income of the property, to get rid of upwards of eight or nine thousand pounds which were really Miss Piers's.'

'He seemed to live tolerably fast,' said Mr. Thornton.

'He made no great show, and Mrs. Piers did not give me the idea of extravagance,' observed Mrs. Trent.

'Board of green cloth, eh?' suggested Watkins.

'It is impossible to say,' returned Mr. Trent.

'What is the poor devil going to do?' asked Mr. Thornton. 'He cannot live on a thousand a year after spending—What was the rent-roll?'

'Five thousand.'

'After spending five,' concluded the Q.C.

'No. He is far too shrewd and active a fellow to lie idle. I have advised him to study for the Bar; that was his ambition formerly, but he was too poor to wait for briefs. He is going to take my advice, I believe.'

'I dare say he will do very well,' said Mr. Blenkinsop. 'A man who has reduced himself by his own straightforward honesty,

will start with a useful reputation ; the very circumstance will put him well before the legal world.'

'I remember him,' observed Mr. Watkins. 'He was a very smart fellow, well connected too. Is he not brother-in-law to that queer little litigious north country baronet, Sir Gilbert Jervois?'

'He is,' returned Mrs. Trent ; 'and he is married to such a charming pretty creature—quite a love match.'

'I hope the love will not fly out of the window under the present circumstances. Love is somewhat of a summer bird,' said the Q.C.

'What heresy! You must not preach false doctrine here,' laughed Mrs. Trent.

'But, by Jove, what a catch Miss Piers of Pierslynn will be!' cried young Richard Thurston. 'She is no beauty, I believe.'

'Beauty or no beauty,' returned the host, 'she is an uncommonly nice girl, and an artist of no mean ability ; but she is not in the market ; she is going to make a rather indifferent, not to say poor, marriage. It seems, before this curious discovery made her an heiress, she had engaged herself to the son of the lady with whom she lives. He was captain of one of Gibbs Brothers' ships, and must be a steady fellow, for they have taken him into partnership.'

'What! going to marry a merchant skipper?' cried young Thurston with contemptuous surprise.

'Impossible!' exclaimed Mrs. Blenkinsop with horror.

'Will she not listen to the remonstrances of her friends?' said Mrs. Watkins.

'I do not think they venture to remonstrate,' replied Mrs. Trent, 'as her guardian Admiral Desbarres makes no objection. I wish it were a better match ; but I do not see how she was to break her promise to a man who proposed for her when she had nothing, and was earning her bread, not without difficulty.'

'It is evident,' said Mr. Thornton, 'that the Piers family, to which I believe our fair hostess belongs, are of the *sans peur, sans reproche* order, whose word is their bond.'

'I hope so,' said Mrs. Trent, smiling ; 'and in token of my sympathy with my cousin Laura, I have promised to assist at her wedding on the fourth of next month. Give me half a glass more claret, Mr. Thornton, and I shall quaff it to the health of all true lovers, and then we ladies will leave you to discuss profounder subjects.'

Once more the curtain goes up, five years having elapsed since the last act.

Scene—a handsome artistically furnished morning-room, overlooking Regent's Park.

Mrs. Piers-Crewe, fairer, brighter, better-looking than of yore (for nothing beautifies like unselfish happiness), is discovered sitting by a writing-table, trying to teach the alphabet to a brown-eyed, brown-haired urchin of perhaps three years old, by means of picture cards thrown on the floor.

'Bring me B, Georgie.'

Georgie, after a short search, proudly produces S.

'No, no, my darling; try again. This,' rapidly printing it on her note-paper, 'is the shape of B.'

Master Georgie lies down on his stomach with an air of determination, and after much turning over of the cards selects R.

'That is a little nearer,' said his mother, laughing; 'but——'

'Mrs. Reginald Piers,' said a staid footman, in quiet livery, opening the door and ushering in Winifrid—Winifrid charmingly dressed in a spring costume of fawn colour, deepened here and there to brown. She was as handsome as ever, indeed handsomer, with a look of thought in her eyes, a sweet pensive expression upon her lips.

Laura came forward to meet her with the same tender cordiality which time had not altered.

'So you are teaching the poor little fellow already,' said Winifrid, taking Georgie on her knee, and parting his abundant fringe the better to kiss his brow.

'It is as good a play as any other,' returned the mother, 'and he will come to know the letters in time.'

'Perhaps so. I am not so *prévoyante* as you; I never was. How is the Admiral, Laura?'

'Very much the same, weak and averse to take nourishment, but suffers no pain; he seems wonderfully happy. I do not fancy any one knows how much he has suffered from religious doubts and difficulties; and he told me yesterday, that, instead of bodily weakness obscuring his mind, as it was usually supposed to do, his spiritual power seems to grow as his strength declines, and he added: "I begin already to catch glimpses and hear echoes of what eye has not seen or ear heard." He spoke with such a profound conviction, such solemn joy, that for an instant I felt a strange thrill. What wondrous power there is in religious enthusiasm!'

'There is indeed,' returned Winifrid.

Just then, nurse returned from her dinner, and gathered up the picture alphabet, and carried it and the infant student away with her.

'Shall you be able to move the Admiral to the country this summer?'

'I hope so. You know there is really nothing the matter with him; he is just burning out, like a flame too strong for what it feeds upon.'

'How terribly Mrs. Crewe will feel his loss!'

'Terribly! she is the most devoted nurse.'

After a short pause Winifrid resumed: 'To turn to a very different subject, do you ever look at the "Births, marriages, and deaths?"'

'Very seldom, I am ashamed to say. Why?'

'Because,' said Winnie, 'the marriage of Madame Moscynski with an American was in yesterday's "Times."'

'Indeed!' cried Laura. 'It is years since we have heard her name.'

'Ah! I wish we had never heard it,' returned the other; 'she did not leave a blessing behind her. However, when I showed the announcement to Reginald, he smiled rather grimly, and just said, "Won't she make his dollars spin!"'

'Well, she has long been removed from your path,' observed Laura, 'and I think—I hope, dearest Winnie—that your life has been tranquil and happy since—since Reginald took so steadily and successfully to work?'

'Oh, yes, it has been calm; I should like to see more of *you*, dear Laura; but, I do not know how it is, there seems always some obstacle to our meeting, save in the morning. I often want Reggie to go out more of an evening; he works too hard, and——'

'Winnie, do not ask too much of human nature. It is not possible that Reginald can care to be much with us. How can he forget that I have pushed him from his place?'

'He ought only to remember your goodness, to be pleased at his own success! Do you know he has been asked to stand for Thirlstane, near Sir Gilbert's place in the north, and will probably be returned?'

'That will please him; he is naturally a politician.'

'He never seemed to care for anything but pleasure in the old Pierslynn days. How is Mr. Crewe, Laura?'

'Remarkably well; always busy, yet never hurried.'

'I do believe,' said Winnie thoughtfully, 'that you are a very happy couple.'

'We are,' said Laura in a low tone of utter and complete assurance, while her eyes grew moist; 'and,' she added with a smile, 'there were *some* ingredients in our marriage that might have led to little festering jealousies. Mrs. Trent calls us "Ferdinand and Isabella," because we govern our separate kingdoms

so independently and yet in perfect harmony. The country rustic rule is mine, the town and commercial division is completely his ; you see, we have such thorough confidence in each other.'

'There lies the secret,' returned Winifrid with a sigh. 'Though it is only to you I would ever breathe such a confession, there is a certain restraint about Reginald, an impalpable cloud I cannot define that drifts between my husband and myself. He is kind, he is tolerably well-tempered, he is even at times tender ; yet I feel there is a memory or experience of the past that is hidden from me, and the ghost of that forbidden something chills and checks mutual confidence ; in short, my hopes, my happiest moments are with my little girl. Ah ! thank God, *this* baby is a girl !'

'But, dearest Winnie !' cried Laura, inexpressibly touched, 'you and Reginald love each other dearly ?'

'I think we do,' returned Winnie slowly and sadly ; 'yet something has changed in the love of our first happy days ; the light of perfect confidence is dimmed, the subtle fragrance of complete trust has evaporated, I know not why. Can they ever be restored ?'

(*The End.*)

# BELGRAVIA.

JUNE 1883.

## Maids of Athens.

BY JUSTIN MCCARTHY, M.P.

### CHAPTER XVII.

MILITÆ SPECIES AMOR EST.

THE winter was over; spring had come again. The somewhat mechanical revelry of the Carnival had been followed by the sermons of Lent, and Lent had been closed by the ceremonials of Easter. The prickly pears on the Acropolis were already showing their roseate blossoms; the pepper-trees along the roads about Athens were beginning to be in full leaf: the asphodel was luxuriant on Lycabettus; and yet the snow was still lying on the crest of Hymettus; for the winter had been severe and the spring late in coming. It had been a busy winter for me; and, on the whole, a time that might almost be called happy. This may seem a strange declaration for a man in my condition, but it is nevertheless true. I was comparatively happy because I was continually and closely occupied, and because I had once again a purpose in life. We were maturing our plans for a movement across the frontier, and the attempt was soon to be made. It must be made between the snows of winter and the heat which would set in with June.

I have already promised my readers that they are not to be troubled with many political details. I mean to keep my word. This is for the most part a love-story, and just as I myself took to Greek politics and political enterprises only because of my love, so I shall bring them into these pages only where they are absolutely necessary for the central purpose of the tale I have to tell. We were conspiring all through the winter in the most open and unblushing manner. The Government looked on and did nothing and said nothing to interfere with us. Constantine Margarites made one or two expeditions to some of the islands and to Con-

stantinople, and had always reported that things were going on in the most satisfactory way. We were at present making arrangements for a conference with some of our friends from various places which we intended to hold at New Corinth—that is at the town so-called in English guide-books, a place not far from the site of famous Corinth. We had chosen New Corinth for several reasons. It was entirely away from the Turkish frontier, and therefore less likely to arouse suspicion; and the excavations at Mycenæ which were attracting the attention of strangers could be easily reached from that starting-point. Nothing could be more simple than for a tourist party to make for Mycenæ by way of Nauplia, and return to Athens by Corinth, while another party likewise bent on seeing Mycenæ and the Lions' Gate, preferred to sail from Athens to Corinth, and make for the interior in that way. Suppose two or more excursionist parties happened to meet at New Corinth, these going to Mycenæ, those returning, who could feel any surprise or be stirred to any suspicion? Why indeed we should not have the meeting in one of the hotels of Athens, or in the Square of the Constitution, or in the King's Garden, I could not for myself exactly understand. Margarites, however, always gave some mysterious hints of personages to be conferred with, who did not choose to be seen in Athens; and it was immaterial to me where we foregathered so long as we were doing or preparing to do something.

I saw the Rosaïres often during the winter. I went to their house as any ordinary acquaintance might have done. Athena and Mrs. Rosaire had both given me to understand that they wished me not to absent myself from the house. I had not had any further talk with Athena except just such as anybody might have had. There were some changes in our little group of foreign sojourners. Sir Thomas Vale had taken Steenie to Constantinople for some weeks, and had not yet brought him back. The Pollens were in Corfu. Paul Hathaway had become the lion of the English and American residents and visitors. His address on the common basis of creeds had been the first of a series of addresses which had grown into a Sunday afternoon institution. Mr. Hathaway had taken a large room for the purpose over a shop in Eolus Street, and the place was crowded every Sunday afternoon. Nellie Lance was always one of the audience, and appeared to be regularly going in for religion, as her mother put it. The discourses were not, however, what ordinary persons would call sermons. They were dreamy, half-poetical rhapsodies about the mysteries of the human heart, and the good that is in every man and woman, and the love that all creatures owe to one another.

To my somewhat rude and practical mind they seemed to want backbone. It did not appear greatly to matter, so far as the world was concerned, whether everything Paul Hathaway said was a scientific truth or a fable. But it was impossible to listen to one of these discourses without feeling a sincere respect for the orator. Truth, tenderness, and sympathy with human suffering and human weakness were expressed beyond misapprehension in that voice and in those eyes. One always saw some of the listening women in tears. Mrs. Rosaire never failed to attend the discourses, and Athena sometimes went. Whenever she was there Lord St. Ives always happened somehow to turn up also; generally rather late; and he sometimes accompanied the Rosaire to their home.

Concerning myself I may mention that I had entirely recovered from the effect of Pollen's pistol bullet, and that I was looking forward with much anxiety and eagerness to the movement which I assumed would have a good deal to do with the settlement of my destiny as well as that of the claims of Greece. The expedition across the frontier must bring on a crisis; I am speaking now of my own poor personal concerns and not of the legitimate aspirations of Greece. Without putting the reasons very clearly before my own mind, I had come to regard it as a decisive event in my life. If I failed to win Athena by means of that enterprise, and if I came out of the enterprise with my life, then I would bid farewell to Athens for evermore. That of course is assuming the enterprise itself to prove a failure. Should it so far succeed as to bring on a war—and that was all we hoped for—then such help as I could give to the side of Greece should be given with a will and kept up to the last. Somehow I did not expect that this would happen. My conjecture was that the Western Powers would instantly intervene and compel the Greek government to declare against us. I even fancied that the Greek government were letting us go on with our preparations merely in order to give some of the Western Powers an opportunity of making a remonstrance which could not be denied or dallied with. Then the ministers of King George would have an excuse for putting a stop to our schemes, and the country could not well find much fault with them. Whether this was the reason or not, we were certainly allowed to act almost as freely as if we had been making arrangements on behalf of the government itself. We were collecting arms, we were enrolling recruits, we were storing ammunition, we had got a good deal of money one way and another. Say what men will about the Greeks and their love of money, the Greeks who have money will spend it for a national cause with positively



lavish hand. We had foreign sympathizers too, English and other, whom I shall not name. Sometimes there were great popular demonstrations held on the Square of the Constitution, and cheers were given for King George as if he had been the recognised head of the movement. Men came there openly armed as if on parade.

All the time we had the usual amount of bickering and jealousy and wrangling among ourselves. There was the Greek's jealousy of the foreign sympathizer; the foreign sympathizer's occasional dislike and distrust of the individual Greek; the jealousy which the Greek of one province felt towards the Greek of another. There was a fear on the part of one set of men that another set were working in the interests of Russia; a fear on the part of others that the Englishmen concerned in the movement were sent into it by the English government with some sinister purpose. I managed to keep out of most of the quarrels because I had a good deal of practical work to do, and I took very little heed of anything that was said about myself or anybody else. I was able to make myself useful in many ways. My practical knowledge of soldiering and sailing, such as it was, came very conveniently in an enterprise where most persons were amateurs in everything we had to arrange for; and I had always been fond of weapons and knew a good deal about modern gunnery. MacMurchad was a favourite with almost everyone except Margarites. Indeed, it was not altogether the fault of Margarites if MacMurchad and he did not get on very well. MacMurchad distrusted my Levantine profoundly, and hardly took any trouble to conceal his distrust. He disliked him too; always insisted to me that he was 'a mere cad and nothing else;' a judgment which I was not greatly concerned to dispute; but he also protested his belief that Margarites was working in the interest of Russia, in which opinion I did not agree. MacMurchad, I should say, had made a short visit to London meanwhile, had taken part in one or two Irish debates, and had won the applause of even his political opponents by his eloquence. All the same he said he was sick of the House of Commons and was losing faith in parliamentary agitation, without being able to see that there was anything else to be done. He had come back therefore—and for other reasons too, I doubted not—to Athens and to our enterprise.

On one of the eagerly expected days of a foreign post, I was delighted to get a letter from Steenie Vale.

'Misseri's Hotel, Constantinople: March 10.

'Dear Old Chappie,—We are having a splendid time here and have seen a lot of things. We have done the dancing dervishes

and the howling dervishes and all that; I like the howlers best; I think they are more fun; but I say isn't it awful when the old boss dervish stands on the little children? some of them squealed so, poor little beggars. We saw the Sultan going to the Mosque—lots of soldiers of all colours. But of course you've seen all these things often and don't want me to do guide-book.

'I know a lot of fellows here. All the Johnnies at the embassy have been asking about you, and sending regards and all that. We are to have private theatricals soon; I say I wish you could come. Do try, it would be so jolly.

'Now, old chappie, I have something to tell you. The governor is very thick with some of the big-wigs here at the embassies, and he has heard some story about something getting up in Athens, some conspiracy or something, which is likely to lead to a row, and he hears that you are in it. Of course you ain't, are you? I thought I'd give you a hint; *verb. sap.* as Tristram would say.

'I am longing to get back to Athens. How are all the Johnnies? how are the Rosaires? I heard from Athena twice; she wrote me two nice long letters. Good-bye, old chappie.

'STEENIE.'

Steenie was a good boy to give me a friendly warning that stranger eyes were on our doings: but I did not attach much importance to his piece of information, for the plain reason that I had already guessed as much for myself. I did not see how it was possible that movements carried on as ours were, in the open glare of day, could be kept a secret long from anyone whom they concerned.

I had to all appearance settled down into an ordinary friend of the Rosaires. At heart I was nothing of the kind; I was if possible growing more and more in love with Athena, and more and more determined to find some crisis in my fate before long. But in the mean time, I was resolved not to play the feeble and absurd part of a despondent lover, hanging hopelessly and publicly to his scornful lady-love's petticoat tail. A despondent lover, who parades in public his love and his despondency, seems to me quite as ridiculous a figure as a jealous husband who takes all the world into the secret of his jealousy. I was determined to put the best face I could on the matter and look fate boldly between the eyes. Therefore I went to Mrs. Rosaire's house as freely as anyone else; and I verily believe she began at last to think that I was growing reconciled to my disappointment. Athena, I felt sure, did not believe anything of the kind. She understood me fully, but

I think she liked my way of carrying things off and was grateful to me for sparing her some pain.

One day she put this more or less plainly into words. I shall long remember the day for more reasons than one. It was one of Mrs. Rosaire's ordinary reception evenings, and I got to her house rather late. I had not intended to go, but I had been working hard all day, and was tired and grew rather moody and dispirited, and I felt inclined to go and talk to somebody. I went then to Mrs. Rosaire's, and I found that only Lord St. Ives was left of the visitors. He had evidently been there for some time; for on my entrance he was a little doubtful seemingly whether he should not still remain. He wished to stay, but feared that he ought to go. I could understand what was passing in his mind as he lounged uncertainly and held his hat in his hand and looked doubtfully at me. Athena decided his movement for him.

'I am glad you came in, Kelvin,' she said; 'I was afraid you were not coming to-day and I wanted to say something to you.'

Athena did not affect the mysterious in anything. If she wanted to speak to some particular man she said so. Lord St. Ives went, and left Mrs. Rosaire, Athena, and me together. After we had talked for a few moments, Mrs. Rosaire got up and left the room, and Athena and I were alone.

The sensation at first was one to make a man draw a deep breath. Athena was standing at the flower-window, if I may call it so, and caressing some of the spring flowers. The rays of the evening sun were streaming through the half-closed shutters; people begin early to shut out the glare of the Athenian sun; and one streak of bright gold shot suddenly across her. She turned out of the light, drawing her hand across her half-dazzled eyes.

'I want to tell you how thankful I feel for all that you are doing; I have wanted to tell you this for some time.'

'It's nothing, Athena; I am only trying to do the best I can. If I go into a business at all I like to go right into it and work with a will.'

'Greece owes you a great deal. I don't know whether she will ever have an opportunity of repaying.'

'Greece doesn't owe me anything, Athena; no, not the value of a copper coin. I am not doing anything for Greece; I mean, it was not for the sake of Greece I came into this business; I don't want to get credit which I don't deserve.'

She coloured slightly.

'Still, you are working well for Greece; and your friends give you credit for greater disinterestedness than you give to yourself. We should never have been able to get on as well and as fast as

we are doing without you. You think of everything and you are never put out or confused.'

'The other fellows only want an opportunity,' I said. 'Look at MacMurchad—he would make a rattling good soldier if he had a little training. As for Hathaway;' and there I stopped; I did not want to disparage true-hearted Hathaway, but I did not exactly see how I was to discover in him any of the aptitudes for political conspiracy.

'I don't think Mr. Hathaway is in his right place in work like this,' Athena said, and she too seemed embarrassed. 'I have strongly advised Mr. Hathaway to leave Athens and go back to his own country. He is only wasting his time and his talents here.'

I am sorry to say that I broke into a laugh. Athena looked surprised and became very grave.

'So poor Hathaway is being sent home too,' I exclaimed. 'He is to be out of the running as well as others! You are thinning the ranks, Athena; but I fancy if you act on that principle, you will have to thin them a good deal more. Why don't you send MacMurchad home too? He is just as far gone as Hathaway, I think.'

'I didn't quite expect this from you, Kelvin; I don't understand why you should make a jest of my wish to see Mr. Hathaway's talents and his eloquence and his noble spirit turned to better account than they can be here. I think so highly of him! There are things that I believe and that he does not believe; but I can see that he is a man of true religious feeling.'

'I only wish I could fix my eyes as steadily on the next world as he does,' I said. I had ceased to laugh, and in any case my laugh was not exactly one of mirthfulness.

'Yes, but it is not for himself he thinks of the next world; it is for all men and women; and he thinks of this world too for their sake. He loves human beings with a real love.'

'He is not happy, Athena.'

'Oh, yes surely, he is happy; in a way. Not happy in having all he wishes for; that might make you or me happy, Kelvin, but not him. He is happy in his love for men and women, and his faith in them and their future. Oh, who should be happy on this earth if such a man was not?'

'I doubt if his time on earth will be very long.'

'Oh, do you think so? Oh, what a pity! He could do so much good. I sometimes think the wife of such a man ought to be the happiest woman in the world.'

'There is a friend of ours who would gladly try her fortune that way, Athena.'

'Nellie Lance? You think so? Yes; I suppose so too. But that would hardly do, Kelvin, would it? They wouldn't be quite suited for each other, would they?'

'I don't know. She's a very good little creature for all her slang; and he could teach her to drop that; and she's awfully fond of him. Isn't that the regular sort of thing in this most beastly of all possible worlds? Nellie Lance has set her heart on him; and he has set his heart—on someone else. Just so; I really should not wonder, Athena, if there was some absurd woman somewhere who had positively set her heart on me.'

Athena turned a kindly smile on me.

'You are sure to come all right,' she said. 'There must be women in love with you, Kelvin; or there will be. You don't know how highly I think of you when I see the way in which you have thrown your heart into this struggle; and, too, when I see the way in which you have accepted for yourself—things as they are. I owe you a deep debt of gratefulness, Kelvin, for having taken me at my word and spared me.'

'Yes; "ich grolle nicht,"' I said, quoting from Heine; 'where's the good in grolling?'

She started. We had not heard any footstep or the opening of door or the rustle of curtain, and yet there was Constantine Margarites standing close to us. His face was deathly pale and his eyes glittered, and his lips were tremulous. I have long got the way of looking to a man's lips when I want to know whether he is really moved or not. First the lips and then the hands. These don't deceive. Many a man can teach his eyes to mask his feelings who has no such power over his lips and his hands. The lips of Margarites were trembling and the fingers were clutching each other convulsively.

'Any bad news?' I exclaimed.

'Bad news? oh no; what could there be of bad news? I should say good news for somebody rather; very good news. What should you think, divine Maid of Athens?'

'I haven't heard any news, good or bad,' she answered coldly. 'Like Mr. Cleveland, I thought you were bringing us some unpleasant story: you looked like it.'

'I should not like to be the bearer of bad news to Miss Rosaire,' he said, now recovering his self-possession. 'I have always seen that the bearer of bad news comes in for some of the reproach, and so if there were bad news to be told I think I should commission some other poor fellow to undertake the charge. But I have heard of nothing, except some absurd rumour that our goings-

on are causing some talk in Stamboul; which happily is impossible.'

I did not think it impossible, quite the contrary. The marvellous thing would have been if proceedings carried on like ours could fail to be talked of in Constantinople. I said as much, and in proof of what I was saying I brought forth and read Steenie Vale's letter, or at least that part of it which related to the rumours in Stamboul.

'What date is that letter, pray?' Margarites asked with a peremptory manner which had something almost offensive in it. He seemed as if he were anxious for an excuse to be out of humour with somebody.

I told him.

'Then you mean to say, Cleveland, that you have kept that letter for days in your pocket and never told anyone about it? Do you mean to say that?'

'You had better not keep up that tone, Margarites, if you want me to say anything. The letter didn't seem to me of the slightest importance. Why should it? Everything we do is done in such an open and absurd way that it would be impossible for the people in Constantinople not to know something about it.'

'That letter disarranges all our plans, it forces our hand!' he exclaimed with passion in his eyes. 'If I had even known of it before—even yesterday would have been well. Good heavens!' he turned to Athena and began to talk to her in the most voluble Greek with rapid and vivid gesticulation. I could not follow what he was saying, I could only catch a word here and there. But it was easy enough to know that he was trying to convince Athena that my indifference to the hint in Steenie's letter must have disastrous consequences. Athena answered him, speaking Greek also, but apparently very composed and even a little contemptuous.

At the end of a little dialogue she shrugged her shoulders slightly and then addressed herself to me. I had been standing more or less disconcertedly by while the talk was going on. 'I beg your pardon, Kelvin, I have been very rude; but I forgot for the moment that you are not as much of a Greek as I am. I have been telling Mr. Margarites that all this doesn't alarm me in the least, although Mr. Margarites thinks it very serious, and he ought to understand better than I. But I heard the same thing from Lord St. Ives some days ago, and I told Mr. Margarites of it then.'

'But I don't believe Lord St. Ives; I don't mind what Lord St. Ives said; Lord St. Ives is a fool.'

'Lord St. Ives is a gentleman,' I said.

'You admire him, do you?' Margarites asked scornfully; 'yes; you of all men! That is just the way of all you English; you admire a lord whatever he does, even though he has interfered with you in every way. I shouldn't have thought you would be quite so very very fond of Lord St. Ives.'

I was resolved in any case not to lose my temper when discussing these various questions in Athena's presence. But at the moment I did not feel the slightest indication of a coming loss of temper. I thought Margarites in his present mood was merely a ridiculous figure. It is surprising how a young, handsome, and graceful man like Margarites, a man whose face and form had some of the finest attributes of his Greek race, could suddenly make himself look so vulgar. He might now have been taken as a living effigy of the old-fashioned forecastle notion of 'a jabbering foreigner.'

Perhaps something of this feeling of mine expressed itself in my face. Perhaps Margarites was brought back to himself by Athena's surprised and offended look. The sneer faded from his lips and the glare of anger from his eyes, and his voice resumed its familiar blandness and softness.

'I ask your pardon, oh a hundred thousand times pardon, divine Athena,' he said; 'and you too, my dear Cleveland. I would ask pardon of Lord St. Ives if he were here too. I don't know why I spoke against him, I am sure. This little matter annoyed me for the moment; this letter from that boy; and I am afraid still it will disarrange our plans a good deal. So I was for the moment angry and, of course, unjust; what is anger but injustice? Anger is a short madness, says the Latin poet, does he not? With me happily it is only the madness of a moment. To you, Cleveland, I owe an apology here in Miss Rosaire's presence; and I make it, and you will accept it, I am sure.'

'Of course he accepts it,' Athena said, peremptorily. 'And I think we have now heard quite enough of the whole affair.'

'You are angry with me,' he said in a tone of pathetic deprecation. 'I was wrong; I deserve your anger.'

'Dear Mr. Margarites, let us talk of something else.'

Mrs. Rosaire came in, much to our relief, and Margarites allowed himself to be absorbed by her.

'Kelvin,' Athena said, 'there is one thing I must ask of you as a favour; and I must insist upon it. You are not to get into any quarrel with Mr. Margarites; about anything, on any account. Mind, I insist on this; I must have your promise,' she spoke in a low hurried tone.

‘There are not many things I would not promise to do if you asked me, Athena.’

‘There are some; you would not promise to leave Greece when I asked you.’

‘No; but that was a rather different matter, was it not? Anyhow, in this case I shall give you the promise you ask with all my heart. I will not quarrel with Margarites. At least, a quarrel shall not begin with me.’

‘Thanks; that is all I ask. I will insist that he shall not on any account quarrel with you; I feel safe enough about that.’

‘Do you think Margarites will really alter his plans because of what Steenie says in his letter?’

“*Quien sabe?*” as Tristram would say,’ Athena replied, with a gleam of the humour of happier days in her brightened eyes.

Can it be possible, I asked of myself, that she will ever consent to become the wife of that man? I don’t believe it. If I could read the meaning of any look on a woman’s face I know that she felt a contempt for him just now; and she knew that I knew what she felt, and that I shared her contempt to the full. No; come what will, I don’t believe she will marry him.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### TWO VOICES.

THERE was a time when it used to be the fashion of all lovers, at least in poetry and romance, to describe their lady-loves as cruel. Cruelty was as certainly their attribute as beauty and virtue. It was not the sort of cruelty which the fashion of a certain class of writers in our own time professed to admire in women; the cruelty which likes to look on suffering, and which is saturated with sensuous passion. The cruelty of which I speak was that of remorseless implacable virtue, an icy sternness which would give the wretched lover no hope. Even the gentle St. Preux at one stage of his love for the divine Julie describes that charming, tender-hearted creature as a barbarian. I cannot help thinking that if this sort of thing had been the fashion of our day, I might have made out good reason for calling Athena Rosaire cruel. Was it not cruel to know that I loved her, to admit that she had loved me and could have loved me still, and yet to hold resolutely to her purpose of marrying someone else? Yet I cannot remember that during all this time, except perhaps for the one morning under the monument to Philopappus in the mist, I thought Athena cruel. I look back to those days, and I



remember myself, for the most part, in one mood as regarded her. I felt as if all she did must be right. It may be that, in spite of her own words, in spite of my habitual despondency, I had yet a lingering hope that my love-story would end happily for me after all. I do not know whether this was so; but I do know that I did not murmur even in secret against Athena, and that I did not call her cruel.

One evening I left the Café Solon and made up my mind to put in a walk along the Patissia Road. I do not know why people in Athens make it a rule to drive or walk on the Patissia Road. It is for the most part a dull road, and very often a dusty one. Except for some such occasional glimpses as that of the Colonos hillock, with its white monuments, it does not delight the wayfarer with any particularly interesting view. Still, it is the habit of Athens to walk and drive on the Patissia Road, and as I was in the mood for walking, it saved me the trouble of thinking and choosing to turn my steps mechanically towards the beaten route. As I was sauntering along under the scanty shade of a row of pepper-trees I saw Paul Hathaway coming towards me. He always wore a soft felt hat and a short cloak. I had not an opportunity of seeing him in the heats of summer; but up to the present he had not discarded the cloak. His walk was 'melancholy' and 'slow,' in the true sense which Johnson gave to the unconscious pathos of Goldsmith's words. His slight, loosely-built, rather awkward figure, wrapped in the disconsolate old cloak, and his delicately outlined face shadowed by the drooping brim of the felt hat, impressed me with a feeling of pain and pity as he came along in the bright sunlight. He seemed as much out of keeping with the place as a ghost would be. The blue of the sky is too clear; the houses and walls of modern Athens are too gay in colour; the outlines of everything are too sharply defined; there is too much chatter and movement all around for a musing melancholy figure like his. Athens is not like Rome. Athens is not a monumental city: it is not even a city with ruins in it. It is a city set up the day before yesterday, clean, brand-new, spick-and-span, on a spot near to which are two or three ruins. The streets of Athens have no memories in them; one might as well ask for memories in Michigan Avenue, Chicago. Therefore Paul Hathaway's ghostly figure looked curiously out of place—a figure of purposeless dejection in these white, new, busy, noisy, chattering streets. Suddenly there came into my mind what Athena had said to me about him, and how she had urged him to go back to his own country just as she had urged me. A sort of brotherly tenderness of sympathy filled my mind as I remembered this, and I was glad to have the chance of meeting him, and of taking his hand, 'one writ with me





*“A man's nearest duty is at home.”*





in sour misfortune's book.' He did not see me, and was apparently about to turn down a side street. I hurried up in time to stop him. His face brightened with an expression of pleasure at seeing me, and he greeted me with a cheery voice.

I was beginning, after the fashion of my country, to talk about indifferent things; the weather, and the dust, and so on; but Paul Hathaway was not a man who lingered long in the preliminary formalities of conversation.

'I am going to leave you soon, Cleveland,' he suddenly said, with a melancholy smile; 'I am sorry, but it has to be done.'

'You are going back to America?'

'Yes: a man's nearest duty, after all, is at home, and with his own people.'

'I suppose so. I confess that I have been so long knocking about the world, that I have almost forgotten whether I owe any duty to my own people or not; almost forgotten whether they are my own people or not.'

'No, no,' he said gently; 'don't talk in that way, Cleveland, for I am sure you don't mean it; I am sure you love your own people and would do anything to serve them; and some time you too perhaps will feel that you are drawn back to your English home as I to mine in the United States.'

My English home? Athena had used exactly the same words. Where is my English home? In either of the two or three clubs to which I still keep up my subscription. If not there, where else? If I were to walk down St. James's Street to-morrow, how many men should I meet who would feel really delighted to hear that I had returned to my English home?

'Well, you see, Hathaway, it's different; I mean your case and mine are different. You have good work assigned to you in your own part of the world, which nobody could do so well as you, and naturally you feel drawn back to it. I have nothing in particular to do in England, and nobody particularly cares to see me there.'

'I have work set out for me in America,' Paul said, with a slight flush on his delicate face, 'and I begin to think I have been neglecting it; I begin to feel penitent about it. Strange that one can so soon forget his proper calling! I came over to Europe, Cleveland, all full of yearning to see the Old World, so new to me and yet so familiar; I loved it in anticipation; and now I am going back saddened after all. Life seems so hard in Europe, and the political and social problems are so very complex. Nothing appears to move on to improvement. There are only wars and rumours of wars, and bitter poverty standing everywhere side by side with prodigal display; and I see no way upwards for

the poor and the toiling. Even this little Athens where we stand; this little city with the population of one of our smaller wards in New York, or Boston, or Philadelphia; why, look at its struggles and its ambitions and its miseries and its attempts to get on, all made in the wrong direction; all for money and nothing for humanity.'

'There is not much poverty here; nothing like some of our great cities.'

'No; but there is so much that is unhappy and mean and depressing. I am not sorry to leave it; and yet I leave dear friends behind me in it; some of the dearest I have on earth or ever shall have.'

'You are leaving your own heart behind,' I said to myself. 'And I too,' I said aloud, 'when I leave Athens I shall leave some of the dearest friends a man could hope to have.'

'I know it,' Paul answered; and our eyes met.

'Come,' I said, with a grim laugh; 'we understand each other, Hathaway—don't we? we have rowed in the same boat for some little time, have we not?'

'In this effort for Greece? truly yes.' He seemed a good deal confused.

'No, dear friend, I don't mean that; I don't mean that alone, anyhow; in truth, I was not thinking of Greece and her legitimate aspirations just then. I was thinking of certain aspirations in which Paul Hathaway, of Boston, Massachusetts, and Kelvin Cleveland, of London, England, have been indulging themselves, and in which they are alike disappointed. We are not ashamed of it, after all?'

He looked down and spoke with some difficulty.

'I have been disappointed, Cleveland; but only to a certain extent; for I never allowed myself to suppose that I had anything to hope for. I never told *her*, or anyone, about it. I am not sorry that you know; but I wonder how you came to know.'

'Well, being in the same boat, I suppose . . . and I am afraid everybody knows about me.'

'But I should not have thought you were so certainly doomed to disappointment.' He was speaking slowly, and with his eyes still fixed on the ground.

'My sentence has been spoken long ago, Hathaway. I have no more hope than you; it is all over.'

He took my hand in his.

'Then you have borne it bravely, and you teach a lesson to some of those whose profession it is to teach men and women how to bear the disappointments and the pains of life. At one time, I

confess, I thought you seemed depressed and dispirited, but lately you appeared to be in such good heart that I formed the impression that you had reason to hope.'

'No; as I told you, my sentence was spoken. But I tried to turn to and do something, and so keep my mind from idle brooding; and I didn't want to pain—— people; I mean, Hathaway, to pain *her*; as she would have been pained if she saw me moping and miserable. A girl oughtn't to be punished and made unhappy because she doesn't fall madly in love with the first fellow who takes it into his head to fall in love with her or who can't help falling in love with her.'

'You are right, you are quite right, my dear friend; and I tried all I could myself; and I never allowed her to suspect anything; at least, I hope I didn't.'

Some shade of expression, I suppose, must have crossed my face which gave him to know that I at least did not think he had been quite successful in hiding his feelings.

'At all events,' he said gravely, 'I never told her; I was determined to spare her the pain of giving the only answer she could give. She was always kind to me, and I even think she liked me.'

'Oh, yes; I can tell you that much for certain. She feels the warmest friendship and admiration for you. I know it; she has told me so again and again.'

A smile lighted his face, and, as it so happened, the level rays of the setting sun shone on it at the same moment. It looked, I thought, almost like the face of an angel. Surely there are some men who do remind us, now and then, that there were days when angels walked the earth. I don't much mind what we men say or think about angelic women; we are not able to judge of women: we don't see the women as they are: we glorify them if we think they are beautiful and if we love them; and we are utterly indifferent to their merits if we don't; and our own sisters and aunts, however excellent they may be, are always mortals in our eyes. But every man must sometimes have met some other man who makes him, for a moment at least, realise the possibility of angels walking on this earth in human form.

'I am glad you are to be out of this Greek business,' I said, after a moment of silence. 'I am afraid it won't come to much. Some of the men are too little in earnest, and some of the men, and the women too, are rather too much so.'

'Can one be too much in earnest in a good cause?' he asked, with an evident sense of relief at the change of subject.

'In a certain sense, yes; one can be too much in earnest to



have coolness and judgment enough to see the size of the difficulties in the way, and to be able to get over them or round them. I tell you candidly, I haven't much hope.'

'Yet you still keep working on so steadily, and you seem to me to be the life and soul of the whole enterprise.'

'I keep working on because it is something to be doing, and because, if I could serve the cause in any way, I am only too glad; and there are other reasons too, Hathaway, which I leave it to your wisdom to guess.'

'Yes, yes; I see,' he said hastily. 'But you are risking a great deal.'

'Not a bit of it. What have I to risk? I have no pleasing wife; no infant child; I haven't a brother or a sister; I am not even a member of Parliament; I don't leave even a bereaved constituency. I don't suppose I shall be killed. If I were a betting man, I should be willing to offer heavy odds to back that belief; but even if I were to be killed, what then? I shall have to die some time, and I have had a good deal of enjoyment out of life, one way and another.'

'Well, we'll not talk of that; we will anticipate the best. I hope all may turn out well, and that your plans may be successful, and that Greece may have reason to honour you. I wish I could be with you, but it is not my mission after all. I am not a fighting man, Cleveland; I am a man of peace, although I should never think I did my calling any wrong by consenting to buckle the armour of the soldier on in a good cause. But I could not be of much service to you, and my mission is not here.'

'No, it is not. You are happy in having a clear mission anywhere.'

'I am leaving very soon,' he said abruptly; 'in a day or two; perhaps we may not meet again. I am not going back to my home at once; I am going to Jerusalem; and I hurry away in order not to be too late there. The Syrian heats I believe are terrible.'

'This will be the best possible time if you get away at once; but you don't seem to me to be quite strong enough for rough travelling, Hathaway. Wouldn't it be better that you should spend a few weeks of complete rest in some mild place——'

'No; I can't do that. I feel as if I must go to Jerusalem, and now; I don't feel as if the thought of rest, the well-ordered satisfaction with which a man settles down to his duty, could come to me anywhere but in Jerusalem. And I shall be glad to tell my people over in Massachusetts something about Jerusalem the golden. Something calls me to Jerusalem; I must go there.'

Good-bye, my dear friend ; I shall think of you often in my home across the Atlantic, and if ever you visit the States again you must come to me.'

'But I shall see you again before you go?'

'Perhaps; but I may go at any moment. Anyhow we shall meet again. Shall we not?'

Our hands clasped, and he took leave of me with a sweet smile. I stood and looked after him. He turned back once and waved his hand in farewell. Then he turned round a corner, and I went on my way.

But I had Paul Hathaway in mind though not in sight. Yes; it will do him good to go to Jerusalem; that iron-stone city of strange contrasts and paradoxes, where, according to the mood in which you find yourself, or the spot on which you stand, it appears as if everything had been changed or as if nothing ever had changed, ever could change there; a city of divine dreams and of hard prosaic realities; a city of visionaries and saints and fanatics and madmen and commonplace traffickers and tradesmen. Jerusalem is the place for the sick at heart, either to be roughly made robust again by a shock, or to dream and meditate and fade away from the living and work-a-day world altogether. Perhaps he will soon return healed to his home and his ministrations somewhere near bright and pleasant Beacon Street in Boston—from the *Via Dolorosa* to Beacon Street will be in every sense a considerable distance to traverse! He does right to go back to his own country and his own work. Sometimes the words that Athena and he had alike used concerning me came up in my mind and brought doubt and pain with them. My English home?—Is a man bound to his country in that sense that he ought to think first of her and only of her? What should I do for England when I had got to that room or set of rooms in London which for the sake of euphony I shall call my home? How should I set about the work of serving England? Would looking into the club and reading all the morning and evening papers each day open out a way of serving England? Would inspiration come to a man in the stalls of one of the theatres? Ought I to stand for some county or borough? and how should I come to know for certain whether I was on the right or the wrong side? No; I do not see my way to serving my country at home; and I do now see some way of lending a helping hand to a country that is not mine but which is for good reason dear to me and far dearer still to one most dear to me. I think I see a duty here written out clearly enough to satisfy my conscience at all events; especially seeing the way my feelings go. On the whole I do not envy Paul Hathaway his mission which calls

him back to his own country. No; as Coriolanus puts it: 'I'll die here;' always supposing that I get the chance. Yet I could not conceal from myself that the word 'home,' the thought of a possible home, the knowledge that I have no home and am not likely ever again to have one, did for the moment bring a certain pang to my heart.

## CHAPTER XIX.

## THOUGHT-READING.

MEN walk fast when they have formed a purpose, or are trying to escape a doubt. After I had seen the last of Paul Hathaway I began to walk fast to escape the doubts which had been suddenly called up in my mind. I could not help making fanciful and melancholy pictures for myself of Hathaway's lonely figure on the stony side of Kedron or in crumbling Bethany; and always when I thought thus of him, I had before my mind a dismal companion-picture of poor little Nellie Lance sitting forlorn in her room in Athens, or it might be in London, and looking wistfully out for her pale saint and hero, who is not to come any more. Well, Nellie is a healthy and sprightly little girl, and she will outlive her love-pangs and find a husband somewhere who will suit her better, and whom she will better suit, than the consumptive and dreamy missionary from Massachusetts. I wonder can it be, seeing what a game of cross-purposes so much of our love-making is, that there is some woman somewhere whose heart is turned to me and who really looks on me as her hero? I had said this to Athena in jesting words: but suppose it were true? I should be very sorry for the poor young lady; for in faith I could not give her back her love.

Why should one allow himself to think of nonsense such as this on a bright spring evening and perhaps on the eve of a great enterprise?

A carriage rattling after me roused me from dreams; I drew a little aside to give it room to pass. But instead of passing me it pulled up short and a woman's voice called my name; and looking up I saw that the occupant of the carriage was Mrs. Pollen.

'I am so glad to see you,' she said in her low emphatic tone and fixing her eyes on me.

Of course I expressed my delight at seeing her, and my surprise at meeting her thus in Athens, where, so far as I knew, she had not yet been expected.

'Mr. Pollen is not with me,' she said; 'he was too comfortable to stir from Corfu; he smokes and drinks brandies and sodas all

day long. There are some choice spirits there; English and French. There is the second son of one of our great English dukes; he got into some trouble at home; something about a cheque on which in mistake he wrote his father's name, or something of that kind; and there is another ornament of our aristocracy who is in difficulties about races and bets and that sort of thing; and there is a French gentleman who has not, I think, his own wife with him; and these and a lot of others are at the hotel, and my poor Pollen thinks he is in the thick of aristocracy and he is as happy as the day is long. I had a particular reason for wishing to spend a few days in Athens; and he kindly allowed me to leave him. Of course if he hadn't given me permission I couldn't have come; I am, as you know, a most obedient and devoted wife.'

I said I had no doubt that in that as in all other matters she acted as became a British matron; or words to that effect; at which she laughed.

'You were walking this way,' she said. 'Get in and let me take you where you are going. I want to talk to you very particularly. You are not afraid to be seen with me?'

Thus challenged, I got into the carriage of course, and she gave the signal to her coachman and we rattled along. The evening was beautiful; spring is the lifetime of beauty in Attica—and, will it be believed?—I was rather glad to talk with Mrs. Pollen. The woman had proved herself to be a sort of living enigma when I sat next to her at her dinner-party, and since that time we had not exchanged any but the most formal and commonplace words.

'You are not looking well, my friend,' she said at once. 'My friend?—or should I not rather call you my enemy? Think what a happy widow I might be if you had only had my interests at heart just at the proper moment. Do you know that crape becomes me of all things? No matter; I forgive you. I am going to attend Mr. Hathaway's revivals or blue-ribbon discourses or salvation army; what are they? But you are not looking well; and I am sorry.'

I thanked her for her sympathy, but assured her I felt all right; never better.

'I don't believe it; you are looking awfully wasted and worn. How old are you, Mr. Cleveland? You may tell me.'

I should not mind telling anybody; and so I let her know the exact truth.

'So young as that? Are there really human beings still so young as that? You look much older; you look quite thirty-five. Well, you would be younger than I am even if you were thirty-

five; I shall be thirty-six on the fifteenth of this month. I tell you in advance, Mr. Cleveland; for I shall expect a birthday present from you; and it must be something appropriate; something which will have expression in it; and it must not cost money; it must be the cheapest thing you can get. I hate money; I hate things that cost money; I hate people who are fond of money. I wish to heaven I were a poor girl again; I have never had one day's happiness since I became rich. No; not one.'

I was seated in front of her in the little open carriage; I could not help seeing that tears were rising in her bold bright eyes. This woman is sincere.

'One can do so much with money,' I said, thinking bitterly enough what the want of it had done for me.

'In your case; yes; I understand,' she turned her face away, and seemed as if she were looking out for Colonos on her left. 'You have family, but not much fortune, I can see. If you had money you could carry off the fairy princess. Now there is Lord Redtape on the one side and Anastasius on the other. You know Anastasius—Hope's novel about the young Greek scamp?'

'I know it and admire it immensely; but I didn't think people read it now.'

'People don't; but I do; I am old-fashioned—I like Byron. Only think how old-fashioned I am and how brave I am, Mr. Cleveland; I admire Childe Harold and I say so!'

'Then we are in sympathy, Mrs. Pollen; I admire Childe Harold too.'

'How I wish we might revive the good old French fashion of calling women by high-sounding fictitious names! Then I could get my friends to call me Artemisia or Saccharissa, and not Mrs. Pollen. Well; we were talking of Anastasius?'

'Is *he* an Anastasius, do you think?'

'I ought to ask you that question, Mr. Cleveland. You are one of his friends and allies: I wouldn't trust him far if I were you. I like Lord Redtape better; he seems honest and truthful; and a trifle dull.'

As she talked in this way, having much the greater part of the talk to herself, a thought came into my mind which for the moment was a little disconcerting.

'Yes; it would be embarrassing,' she said; 'wouldn't it?'

I had not said that anything would be embarrassing; I had not said anything. I looked up surprised.

'What would be embarrassing, Mrs. Pollen?'

'You were thinking to yourself that it would be embarrassing if you were to meet Mrs. Rosaire and her daughter just now.'

This was exactly what I had been thinking of; I wish she had not guessed at it.

'That's nothing;' she said quietly. 'Anyone might have known that you were likely to think of that; and I saw a doubt come over your face just at the moment when I was looking for it. You see, I spoke of Lord Redtape, and I knew that his name would bring a certain association of ideas to your mind; that I was quite certain of; and when you had that idea in your mind I saw the look of discomfort and doubt, and of course I knew that meant "what shall I do if Miss Rosaire should pass just now and see me with this audacious woman?" Oh, that was nothing; anybody could have done as much as that. I'll show you something more surprising some day. Have you ever tried to direct the current of people's thoughts?'

'No; I don't think I have any great gift that way.'

'You should make the experiment. You have no idea how successful one can become. Of course I have advantages. To be married to a stupid partner and to have to play the part of a stupid commonplace woman brings out all one's faculties, I can tell you. No, I never was on the stage.'

I smiled. 'I confess I was asking myself that question about you, Mrs. Pollen; you scored distinctly that time with your thought-reading.'

'Pray don't confound my system with the vulgar jugglery people talk about in London. Mine is mere observation; observation and nothing more. No; I was never on the stage; I never had anything to do with art of any kind. My father was in the Indian army in the old days of John Company; my mother came of Indian parentage on her father's side; the race we politely call niggers out there; her father's was a race of princes and philosophers and soothsayers and devotees. Just before the Indian mutiny, my mother died; we were awfully poor; we came to England; my father settled down in Cheltenham on half-pay or something; Mr. Pollen turned up; I thought I could be happy with money, and I married him, sixteen or seventeen years ago; and I was and am and shall be miserable. There you have my whole history.'

'But surely one need not be miserable under such circumstances; one can do so much good with money.'

'One can if one has a genius for looking after the poor, which I haven't; or can throw one's soul into some great cause like your Athenian girl, which I never had a chance of doing; and always provided one's husband allows one to spend his money any way one likes, which is not the case with me.'

'I should think Mr. Pollen would be very generous with his money.'

'On anything that would show off, yes; certainly. If I took a liking to anything costly, he would get it for me; I might drape myself with diamonds and he would be only too willing to pay for them. That would be seen by people and would look fine, don't you see? The upshot of the whole thing is that I hate money and people who are fond of money. Do you know why I always felt so much drawn to you?'

'Because I have no money, I suppose.'

'Well, because you seem to be down on your luck somehow; things don't seem to go right with you. You are decidedly *bon diable*, I think; but pray don't allow yourself to be a mere *bon diable*; you were meant for something better than that. I think I know all about you; I don't ask you to trust me; but if ever you feel any inclination that way I shall prove a good "pal," I can tell you. I am a woman to be trusted by anyone she likes.'

'Indeed, I can fully believe that; and I think you have a generous heart.'

'You think I am *bon diable* too? Well; so I am; if a woman ever can be a genuine *bon diable*, which I doubt.'

'You are certainly meant for better things,' I said, giving her back her own words with earnestness.

She shook her head.

'No; not under the conditions. Things are different with you; and I hope you will come all right in the end; I should back you against Redtape if I had anyone to bet with on such a subject; but I only speak of it to you, and you won't bet.'

'No; I couldn't bet fairly, for I know I have no chance.'

'Against Redtape? Oh, yes; I shouldn't think him the most dangerous rival. Beware of Anastasius! And I don't think, if I were you, I should go into any very dangerous enterprise with your friend Mr. MacMurchad.'

'Come now; you are out of it for once—MacMurchad is as true a comrade as ever lived.'

'As if I didn't know! Anyone can see that. I saw it in his eyes the first day he came to Athens. But don't you share in all his dangers all the same. He'll come to grief.'

'Why do you think so? How do you mean?'

'I always see that young man as if a shadow were falling on him. What he attempts will fail; and he will be a victim. You laugh at me for trying to turn prophetess?'

'Well, you are a very clever woman; but I don't believe in uninspired prophecies, Mrs. Pollen.'

‘If you see a shadow thrown on a path you know that a figure will follow, although you don’t pretend to be a prophet. However, we shall see.’

I was going to say “*nous verrons*, as Tristram would put it”; but I refrained. Mrs. Pollen had decidedly succeeded in making me feel an interest in her.

We had turned by this time and were driving back into the city. Habitude only encourages a drive to a certain point of the Patissia Road. We began to meet carriages from Athens and would be sure to encounter somebody whom we knew. I must confess that I should rather not have been seen driving out with Mrs. Pollen, but there was no help for it now; and I was not ungallant and selfish enough to make any positive effort to escape. Besides, I really began to like her.

Margarites! Of course; the very man I didn’t wish to see; the very man I might have counted on seeing. He was driving in his showy little carriage with some Greek friend. On seeing us he made a superb salutation and pulled up his carriage. We had to come to a stop also.

‘How delightful a meeting! My very dear Mrs. Pollen, I had not the least thought of seeing you in Athens. I thought you were in Corfu. How does the excellent Pollen bear himself? How do you do, my dear Cleveland?’

Mrs. Pollen explained that the excellent Pollen was still in Corfu.

‘And he commits you to the charge of the dear Cleveland. Well, you are in good care.’

‘I met Mr. Cleveland here on the road by chance, and I took charge of him; for a drive. Who are in town, Mr. Margarites? The King and the dear Queen?’

‘Their majesties, I think, are at their country house; I have not had the honour of an invitation from them for some time.’

‘No? how odd. They are always so attentive to us. Are there any nice English people in Athens?’

‘Well, there are Lady Lance, the Clissolds——’

Mrs. Pollen shrugged her shoulders.

‘Ah, only these; I didn’t exactly mean persons like that; very good people too; but I mean rather—I don’t quite know. Well, we shall meet again, Mr. Margarites.’

‘Surely I trust so—soon and often.’ We exchanged fresh salutations and Margarites drove away.

‘Come, I have mystified him pretty effectively, I think,’ Mrs. Pollen said with an air of triumph. ‘I was Pollen’s wife then, don’t you see? Did I do it well?’



‘Yes; you did it well; but why you should care to play such a part at all is something that passes my comprehension.’

‘One must do something to amuse oneself,’ she said coolly, ‘and that amuses me. It pleases my husband that I should set up for admiring great people as he does; and after all I am bound to do something to please him; and I please myself by playing the part out to the full. You get to understand people so well when you can study them from behind a mask! My husband hasn’t the faintest idea that I don’t despise poor people and artists and authors and all that lot just as much as he does. I get unending fun out of Mrs. Clissold; you know her; the snobbish painter’s snobbish wife? We go into rivalry of snobbishness, showing off in competition all our grand acquaintances: and I sit on her awfully; because she is in earnest and I am only acting comedy. Do you know that I once invented an Austrian arch-duchess and Mrs. Clissold said she knew her too; yes; before a whole roomfull of people; said she knew her very well. That was delightful. You must see me play off Mrs. Clissold some day. You look dreadfully shocked, but it serves people of that kind quite right.’

We were now driving through the streets of Athens, and of course were seen and saluted by numbers of friends. The whole foreign colony will hear of Mrs. Pollen and me before nightfall. Indeed a very fair representation of the foreign or at least the English colony was actually standing on the steps of the hotel as Mrs. Pollen and I rattled up to its door. There was no escape. Mrs. Pollen was staying as before in the hotel where I lived, and we had to alight and ascend the steps together. I assisted her to descend with becoming gravity, and she took leave of me for the moment, telling me in a loud tone meant to reach the ears of the English colony that I was to be sure to send her kindest regards when I wrote next to my uncle Lord Kelvin.

I had not noticed at first that Lord St. Ives was standing in the hall a little apart from the lounging residents of the hotel.

‘I had just looked in, Mr. Cleveland,’ he said; ‘I wanted to see you. Can I say a word or two?’

We found our way into a quiet corner of one of the reading-rooms. We had the room indeed all to ourselves. It was coming near to the hour of dinner, and people were dressing, or, not meaning to dress, were lounging at the door and enjoying the bright spring air.

Lord St. Ives and I had always been friendly enough in manner but were not exactly cordial. He was a little embarrassed now as he began what he had to say.

‘The fact is, Mr. Cleveland, I thought I had better come and

tell you. It's about —well, about something I have heard which you ought to know, I think.'

'Much obliged, Lord St. Ives, I'm sure.'

'Well, I have been seeing a man who has just come from Constantinople, and he tells me—he tells me—that—in fact what he says is that there is some talk there, among the diplomatic fellows, don't you know—of course I dare say there's no end of nonsense and chatter and gossip going on there—there always is; but still I think it well to tell you.'

He had not told me anything so far; and it did not seem as if he were likely to come to the point very soon. I would not help him in the least, although I could guess easily enough now what was to come.

'They talk of some conspiracy or something going on here in Athens to make some inroad into Turkish territory.'

I nodded but said nothing.

'They say that the Government in Constantinople have certain information that there are Englishmen in it.'

'Very likely, I should think,' was my only comment.

'They say that you are one of them, Mr. Cleveland. I thought it right to come and tell you.'

'Thank you, Lord St. Ives: you are very kind, and I am ever so much obliged to you.'

'I hope it isn't true, Mr. Cleveland.'

'Why, Lord St. Ives?'

'Well, I don't think it an Englishman's business —'

'It may be one Englishman's business and not another's,' I said very coldly.

'Yes, yes; quite so, of course; of that every man must judge for himself.'

'Precisely.'

Lord St. Ives grew a little red.

'Pray don't mistake me; don't imagine that I want to intrude any advice,' he said hastily; 'I only wanted you to know that there are people looking over the cards all the time.'

'Thank you, Lord St. Ives; it was really very kind of you to give me a hint; I suppose that was all you wanted to do.'

'Well, that was part, but not all.'

No; I thought as much. Lord St. Ives would not have been quite so much embarrassed if he had only come to give me a hint and put me on my guard. I remained silent and he had to go on.

'I wanted to put this to you, Mr. Cleveland. Do you think it right to bring women, English women, into conspiracies and things of that sort?'

'I should think it very wrong indeed for a man to bring any women, whether English or not, into any conspiracy.'

'But pray excuse me; I am under the impression that you are doing something of the kind.'

'Then don't be under the impression any longer—for I am not doing anything of the kind, and never did.'

'I find I must speak out a little plainly, Mr. Cleveland.'

'The plainer the better, Lord St. Ives. I like coming to the point of a thing at once.'

'I think, then, that you really ought not to use your influence with Miss Rosaire; we must mention names. You are not doing a wise thing, or a kind thing for her, when you encourage her to take part in these conspiracies or whatever they are. You are, I believe, a very old friend of hers, and she is naturally influenced by your advice. Perhaps you will ask me what business this is of mine, Mr. Cleveland——'

'Indeed I shall do nothing of the kind.' I was quite determined to act in good temper, and I was able to make full allowance for Lord St. Ives and his position and his feelings. 'I don't question in the least the propriety of the course you are taking. But I am surprised that you should know so little of all that is going on as to suppose that I am anything but the very humblest instrument in the whole affair. I am only in it because Miss Rosaire was in it; she didn't advise me to have anything to do with it; on the contrary, she did her best to keep me out of it—and I would have kept her out of it if I could; I would have gone any length to keep her out of it. But she is not like other girls, and she hardly counts herself an English girl. She thinks she has a duty to do, and when once she has got that into her mind neither you nor I, Lord St. Ives, could talk her out of it. I shan't try any more; why should I? She knows better than I what she ought to do. All I can say is that since she is in it, why, I am in it too! That's the whole story, Lord St. Ives. You cannot say that I have not met you fairly and with good temper——'

'Certainly, certainly; nothing could be more friendly and more frank; I am obliged to you more than I can tell. But I certainly understood otherwise, and on what I thought to be good authority; that must be my excuse.'

I could not help smiling. I knew well enough what the good authority was. Mrs. Rosaire, of course, had been giving Lord St. Ives her version of passing history.

'I don't like it,' St. Ives said warmly; 'I don't like the whole business; it's not the thing for an Englishwoman so young as that. I don't like some of the men it brings around her—some of the

Greek fellows especially. May I ask, Mr. Cleveland, is that lady in the thing; the lady who went in just now; the lady who was with you in the carriage?’

‘Since you have asked me the question, and to give no answer would lead to a grave mistake, I don’t mind telling you, Lord St. Ives, that Mrs. Pollen has no more to do with the affair than you have, and would be even less likely than you to take any part in it. But I think we mustn’t have any more questions that bring in people’s names, especially the names of ladies.’

‘Quite right, quite right; I beg your pardon. I know I ought not to have asked such a question, but it was done hastily and without thinking. Happily you were able to give it an answer that is satisfactory in every way. I have only to thank you for meeting me in this friendly way. We are friends, Mr. Cleveland, I hope?’

‘Certainly we are not enemies, Lord St. Ives.’

He had risen to go, and was standing in a hesitating way.

‘I suppose it wouldn’t be of any use my trying to induce you to withdraw from all this business? It’s full of danger, I can assure you; nothing but mischief can come of it.’

‘No, Lord St. Ives, your advice would be thrown away on me. But I thank you all the same.’

‘What can an Englishman have to do with the schemes of a set of Greeks?’

‘Greece is the nursing mother of all of us,’ I answered gravely. ‘Civilisation drank at her breasts; every civilised man is her foster-son and owes her some duty.’

He raised his eyebrows with an amusing expression of surprise and bewilderment, as I spoke this fine speech.

‘Come, that is not really your reason for risking your life in such an affair,’ he said, in a tone of the most serious remonstrance.

‘No,’ I answered, ‘it is not, but it will serve.’

He looked keenly at me, and a faint colour came on his quiet face. Then he bade me good evening and we parted. There was nothing more to be said on either side. We understood each other.

*(To be continued.)*

## The Fly-fisher's Birds.

It may be questioned whether a man, however expert an angler he may be, can ever attain the character of a complete angler unless he be a lover of the flowers and birds of the district through which his stream may run. This conception of the fly-fisher arises partly from the nature of his craft, which leads him far afield and promotes keen observation; partly from the pictures which Walton and Dame Juliana before him have painted of the ideal angler. The latter says of the fisherman in language which breathes from an April day at the brook-side: 'And yet atte the leest he hath his holsom walke and mery at his ease. A swete ayre of the swete sauoure of the meede floures: that makyth hym hungry. He hereth the melodyous armony of fowles. He seeth the yonge swannes: heerons: duckes: cotes and many other foules wyth theyr brodes;' while there is no need to quote Walton's exquisite words on the 'little nimble musicians of the air that warble forth their curious ditties with which nature hath furnished them to the shame of art;' or to remind anglers how he dwells on the lark, linnet, blackbird and thrush; 'the honest robin that loves mankind both alive and dead' (rather a mistake, by the way, for the robin is naturally a shy bird and does not care to approach houses until hungerbitten; but who can fall out with Walton?), and especially on the nightingale. If we turn to the poets of the craft, too, we find them greatly indebted to, and keen observers of, bird-life. J. D. celebrates the nightingale, 'Progne's sister;' 'Juno's bird,' and the other birds which

with chanting song

Do welcome with their quire the summer's queen.

The authors of the 'Fisher's Garlands' do not forget the birds which invite the angler forth; while the late Mr. Stoddart, we may be sure, was glad to introduce them into his verse—that verse which has planted by so many Scottish rivers flowers of song. Probably many anglers, like ourselves, look with special favour on a few river-side birds which are connected in their minds with days free from care and with familiar scenery. It has struck us that a list of the birds which fly-fishers most associate with their sport could be made without much trouble; so this paper is an attempt towards fulfilling the want. Many birds are total strangers to the fisherman and appear to shun water. Thus the robin we have never seen near water; a thick forest is its most grateful summer

haunt. A few birds which are not here mentioned may of course have been noticed ere now by fly-fishers exercising their craft in particular districts. But it may be hoped that fly-fishers generally will accept the following birds as being more especially sacred to their reminiscences of sport.

Royalty first: the golden eagle, as he is supreme in size, boldness, and majestic carriage among British birds, claims precedence. Him the angler on the lonely Sutherland lochs may not seldom observe circling round some lofty mountain's top, Suilvean, say, or Ben More, while his own casts are being made, and if previously inclined to disparage the royal bird's supremacy as he saw him hop away and fly heavily aloft, gorged with the flesh of some dead sheep, he now recants the heresy at once. We shall not soon forget the golden eagle which sailed across Loch Merkland on the first day when we fished that excellent sheet of water. Occasionally a sparrow-hawk will dart by the solitary fly-fisher, but as a rule he cannot claim familiar acquaintance with any other of the *Accipitres* save the kestrel. This bird is frequently seen hovering over moorland or meadow at his side, fearlessly pursuing its office in ridding the fields of mice, and frequently sacrificed to the ignorance of some keeper or farmer. Among the *Merulidæ* comes what might be called *par excellence* the angler's favourite bird. Whose memories of Devon trout-stream or wild Highland river are not associated with the dipper? Early or late in the season he is always on his shallows or standing on rocks in the centre of a foaming current, and often may his pleasing voice be heard. It is a comfort to think that if the dipper is accused as a destroyer of fish spawn, the greater number of naturalists unhesitatingly acquit it of the charge. Macgillivray decisively cleared it years ago by examination of the contents of the stomach in several specimens; 'yet in some places, particularly in Scotland,' says Prof. Newton, 'it is foolishly destroyed by every possible device, while examination of its gizzard proves it to be one of the best guardians of a fishery.' Mr. A. E. Knox pronounces the same verdict, and his excellent description of the bird and its mode of life merits careful attention at the hands of all who are in the least doubtful on the subject ('Autumns on the Spey,' p. 150 *et seq.*). The bird is connected in our mind with the sitting-room of the little inn at Dalwhinnie, so well known to Highland trout-fishers, as from its window we watched two dippers deliberately walk under water and emerge again more than once. We could not, however, detect their mode of progression when under the surface. The missel thrush is for the fly-fisher eminently a bird of early spring. He hears its harsh chattering occasionally as he draws near some clump of elms or

orchard in the West country where it is building thus early in the year. Or on the topmost branches it sings its ill-omened song which forebodes wild weather, and has gained the bird in Notts the name of 'storm-cock.' Later in spring, and on a balmy instead of a wild morning, the angler's heart rejoices as the cheery notes of the song-thrush fall upon his ear; and later again from the thick coppices the blackbird warbles shrill and clear in the intervals of those May showers, during which the March brown proves so deadly a fly. Yet one member of this family, the ring ousel, remains which is peculiarly dear to us as representing recollections of the Perthshire hills at the back of Pitlochrie. There while fishing the Brereachan burn one summer's day we unwittingly drew near some cairns in which several pairs had built their nests, and seldom have we been greeted with such volleys of abuse; the exasperated birds flying close to us, settling on their stony fastnesses, ruffling up their white 'chemisettes,' as Mr. Ruskin affectedly terms the throat feathers, and altogether behaving like viragoes. Later in the season those who know lovely Loch Laggan will remember the same birds among the rowans which skirt the eastern end, their white collars contrasting beautifully with the golden foliage and ruddy berries of the trees.

If others enjoy the warblers (*Sylviadæ*) in garden or woodland, their songs never sound so sweet to a bird-lover as by the water-side, if he be also a fly-fisher. The hedge-sparrow, willow-warbler, and whitethroats, indeed, he only sees for the most part in early spring, flitting through the half-naked branches of alders and copsewood by the river's edge, and haunting the deep overgrown ditches which run down to the stream at right angles from the higher grounds, and form so pleasing a foreground in Devon to an artistic eye, if that eye do not belong to a farmer. The wheatear is another bird of early spring, and must, we suppose, be identified with the Laureate's 'sea-blue bird of March.' On thistle or furze bush the lively stone- and whin-chats are familiar objects to the trout-fisher, and if they are unusually noisy, he more than suspects that a nest with pretty pale blue eggs is somewhere under his feet. Has he to thread a blossoming copse in his course down some secluded stream? He at times catches the sweet song of the blackcap amid the bushes, a minstrel only just inferior to the nightingale; and at once the happy conjecture of White comes into his mind, that this was the bird which Shakespeare was thinking of when he wrote in a song of 'As You Like It'—

And tune his merry note  
Unto the wild bird's throat.

The nightingale itself is identified with the balmy evenings of

May, in a belated fly-fisher's life, as it sings its love-laden melody to the lady moon slowly rising over a purple bank of clouds. Then what a feast of poetic thought is his, lightening the weary path homewards, and recalling many a splendid passage of ancient and modern verse! Sophocles and Milton are in our minds the nightingale's poetic sponsors; the first in well-known strains celebrating its song in the groves of chalky Colonus—a passage, by the way, imitated by Keble, and recalled to his mind by the loud singing of these birds at one spot by the side of the Colne, where we have seen trout well-nigh half a yard long basking on the surface; the second, never weary of matching the most musical words to the classic fables of the nightingale's sorrow—

In her sweetest, saddest plight,  
Smoothing the rugged brow of night.

And again :

Sweet bird, that shunn'st the noise of folly,  
Most musical, most melancholy.

For all devoted anglers, nothing more than a reference need be made to Walton's prose-poem on this bird: 'Another of my airy creatures breathing such sweet loud music out of her little instrumental throat, that it might make mankind to think miracles are not ceased.' It will be remembered, too, that 'honest, innocent, pretty Maudlin,' the milkmaid, 'cast away all care and sung like a nightingale,' to soothe Piscator and his companion.<sup>1</sup> The willow-warblers are identified in all anglers' minds with early spring; while in every fir plantation near the stream the little goldcrests flit twittering from tree to tree, or breaking up these family parties, devote themselves in pairs to the more serious duties of nest-making.

The *Paridæ* are also noticed by the ornithological angler in such wooded plantations as adjoin his river, or among the trees grouped at any bend of it; but their ways cannot then be readily watched as in winter. All the members of the family, save perhaps the blue tit, are more or less shy and retiring during the breeding season. *Parus cæruleus*, however, is irrepressible; while its northern brother the crested tit is never found near water, as far as we are aware, and must be excepted from the rest of the family as being the one species unknown to the angler.

Few families are dearer to him than the *Motacillidæ*. The pied wagtail is a familiar friend always to be seen at certain reaches and gravelly banks of his stream. Occasionally he finds its nest in a deserted rat-hole, and admires the little ones all gaping towards the light. On the lonely burn or by the noisy

<sup>1</sup> *Compleat Angler*, i. 1. 4.



cascade of hilly districts *M. boarula* is an equal favourite. Ray's wagtail is perhaps the lightest-built and most sportive of the family. Often does it flit along, sometimes only with its mate, at other times in a small company, by the hedgerows running parallel with a stream. It always seems in motion, and is perpetually merry. Its beautifully coloured plumage, too, renders it very attractive to the fisherman. These three species are probably those only with which he is familiar.

Among the closely allied families of pipits and larks, all a fisherman's reminiscences of spring are coloured with the meadow and tree pipits; the former singing as it rises and falls over the common or wide meadows by the trout-stream, the latter performing its characteristic evolutions on some old hedgerow during May. The woodlark and especially the skylark are equally dear to him. One of the first signs of spring in Sutherlandshire consists in the skylarks singing during February. Walton's eulogy on it is a beautiful piece of writing, and would alone endear the bird to the angler; while the artless strains of the 'soft enamoured woodlark' sweeten many a tiresome walk to and fro the trout-stream. A good many of the *Fringillidæ* are his friends; the common bunting he sees in the hedges; the black-headed bunting is a special favourite, and reminds him of many a pleasant day as it hops about the sedges and flits beside him while throwing his flies. Its song is poor indeed; but the dark black head and pure white collar of the bird, above all its fondness for the same watery scenes as delight an angler, give it a prominent niche in his recollections. The yellow-hammer and chaffinch he finds at every orchard and farmyard; the linnet is gladly noticed on the common by the furze bushes where it is building, or where its young are hidden. Local though the goldfinch be, wherever there are thistles it may be seen. Consequently it forms part of most anglers' memories of bird-life.

Almost the first bird welcomed by the fly-fisher in spring is the starling. As he emerges from houses and gains the stream by the pathway near the tall elms, as yet destitute of the faintest greenery, high on their topmost twigs sit a pair of starlings, uttering their singular love-calls; 'the chattering harshness of some of its notes,' says Professor Newton, 'making the long-drawn-out sweetness of others, to which they are linked, all the more acceptable to the ear.' And when the first trout of the season is captured in early February, the same song, thin as the old men's voices in the Iliad, falls upon the happy fly-fisher's ear from the elms in the Devon hedgerow behind him. We have a very warm nook in our memory for this active and interesting bird. Among the *Corvidæ* the

rooks and carrion crows are familiar to every fly-fisher in a pastoral country. Jackdaws wrangle round the old ashes in the park as he leaves home, where the rabbits dart from one clump of fern to another as he approaches. The magpie, and probably the jay, tenant any copse to which the stream draws near. The angler sees the former bird daintily hopping beside the hedge in the pasture field where the lambs are gambolling in April; while the latter flaps through the branches in its peculiarly bungling fashion, and salutes him with harsh ill-omened cries. As for the raven, we must again recur to memories of Sutherlandshire or the Highlands, and its dismal form and angry bark come before the mind's eye at once, as it wings its heavy flight over the loch to feast on some dying sheep on the hillside beyond. There is no bird which inspires us with such a desire to shoot it as the raven, knowing well its cruelties as soon as it dares approach the struggling death-stricken victim. One blow, and an eye is struck out from the moribund sheep; the wounded hare, too, feels that sharp beak ere death has numbed its sensations.

The kingfisher is specially dear to the wandering fly-fisher in the 'shires.' In the most lonely spots on his stream, from bush to distant brake, this bird flashes by him like a streak of emerald light. He follows, and in a quarter of an hour or so it darts past him back again. Thus it is identified with grassy meadows, scattered hawthorn bushes, willow holts and other abodes of peace on the angler's beat. Itself well answers to its name; a friend has seen it dive through a thin covering of ice for its prey, and once shot one which fell on the other side of the stream and had a stickleback an inch and a quarter long, and still alive, in its mouth on his crossing to gain his prize. He gave the little fish its liberty, and it swam off as if nothing had happened. The French legend accounts for the kingfisher's brilliant colouring and its habit of darting along the watercourses, by the following scrap of folk-lore. When Noah sent the dove out of the Ark, knowing the kingfisher's fondness for water, he let it out also. It flew so high for gladness that the sky turned its back blue, and the sun scorched the lower part of its body to the rusty red it bears at present. When it returned the Ark had disappeared; and ever since it has been seeking it with plaintive cries along the streams and rivers. The angler finds that his favourite birds increase in interest as he thus garners up any scrap of old-world lore connected with them, and many a gilly and ancient water-watcher can be communicative on these subjects if properly questioned.

Next comes a group of birds more than any other family

familiar friends of the angler. Who cares for a summer stream if it be not haunted by the *Hirundinidæ*? Their absence is the one blot on the great Sutherlandshire lochs. In England the four delightful members of the family—swift, swallow, martin and little rusty-black sand-martin—are everywhere. Waiving the question whether the swift rightly belongs to the *Hirundines*, we will for the nonce admit him, screaming at a great height overhead in the long summer twilight, so as to justify his Nottinghamshire name of 'devilging'; or brushing past the angler in chase of another of his kind so closely that the rush of his wings is distinctly caught. Swallow and martin advance up and down their favourite reach of the stream in a series of aerial leaps as it were, while the business-like sand-martin pursues its even steady course up and down, without any of the jubilant gyrations of its kith and kin. We have known householders so forgetful of poetical association, so discourteous to these airy summer visitors, that they have actually greased the barge-boards and eaves of their houses to disconcert the swallows' attempts to build. As for us—

The swallow oft beneath my thatch  
Shall twitter from her clay-built nest,

if only for Shakespeare's sake; while many a pleasant day lives over again in that one sweet line of Matthew Arnold's—

Where black-winged swallows haunt the glittering Thames.

And when the swallows begin to desert the streams we care no more to go a-fishing. Summer dies at their departure. On two occasions only are they a nuisance to the fly-fisher: and these are when in long days of early June they fly so close that he can scarcely throw his flies without either catching them or being disconcerted at their tameness; and, secondly, when he sees them dealing death and destruction to the May-flies before the latter can fulfil their mission, charging in and out of their dancing bands like *beaux sabreurs* amongst routed infantry. At such times he does wish them away. But in a week his old affection returns. The May-fly season is over and the swallows give him a wider berth. Late in the June evenings he hears that most peaceful of all country sounds the 'chirring' of the fern owl.

Among the *Picidæ* the green woodpecker only draws near the fly-fisher, but he knows its harsh laughter and turns to catch sight of the bird at times flying heavily from one grove to another. And then his soul rejoices within him, for does not the yaffler, as the Devon rustic calls this bird, laugh because rain is at hand? Folk-lore has plenty of depreciatory tales about the green woodpecker, but partly from its flight and colours bringing reminis-

cences of the *Psittacidae*, and perhaps still more from its pluvial fame, it is always a favourite with the wandering angler.

What shall be said of thee, thou cuckoo, the very voice and quintessence in thyself of spring? The poets have sung sweet things of thee, but sweeter are our own memories of 'the merry cuckoo, messenger of spring,' as Spenser calls thee. We have heard thee calling from the red cliffs of Sidmouth at the beginning of our fishing season and, at the end of it, uttering thy farewell from the low bushes round Loch Shin; and how often in the intermediate weeks, have not our hearts thrilled at thy voice amid the deep pastures of home! Who would care to go a-fishing were it not for the lark, the swallow, and the cuckoo? In the vast fields of lava visible between the craters of the moon astronomers have never detected life. Suppose a splendid trout-stream ran through those volcanic plains, and the fly-fisher could be spirited thither for a day's fishing (and it would be a tolerably long day, a day in the moon being equal to twenty-nine and a half of our earthly days), how dispiriting and tame would the walk be without cuckoo or swallow to cheer it, and how half-hearted our gratitude to the man in the moon for his kindness!

Among the *Columbidae* the wood-pigeon has ever a niche in the angler's heart. Virgil's *raucae, tua cura, palumbes*, still echo through every valley of old England and coo just as sweetly-hoarse as they did round his Mantuan farm. Often too does the fisherman hum over 'I have found out a gift for my fair,' that finest of Shenstone's lyrics, between his casts, as the cushat's gentle pulsations of love come to him softened by distance through the fir-trees.

The tree-creeper and wren form the angler's representative birds among the *Certhiidae*, the former only seen on the larger trees, as he crosses by a short cut where the river makes a circuit, or ascends to the squire's house on the hill for lunch; the latter ubiquitous, creeping in and out of the lowest bushes or even the twisted timber and osier-work which prevent the river from scouring away its bank. And much fear we that the fly-fisher never sees it without longing for those feathers in its tail and wings which form so seductive a lure for trout. Blame him not. Envy of this kind hardly dims his innocent guileless nature: he does not covet gold or riches. His sleep is sweet; but 'the cares that are the keys that keep those riches hang often so heavily at the rich man's girdle, that they clog him with weary days and restless nights.'<sup>1</sup>

By the boggy shore of Perthshire lochan, or sunning itself where the sunshine rests at a sudden angle of a Midland hedge-

<sup>1</sup> *Compleat Angler*, i. 21.

row, up fly the red-grouse or partridge, both equally dear to every fisherman, and the only birds among the *Tetraonidæ* which he greatly cares for. They bring previsions of happy days and pleasant evenings when brothers and friends can run down from London for a fortnight; when the woodlands are dappled with gold and Schiehallion shrouds half his huge bulk in mist; when the 'saft' October mornings irresistibly lead the salmon-fisher to take his last casts for the year in the dark brown flood crowned every here and there with clots of foam. But fancy will hurry us too far a-field if we dwell on these enticing subjects: there yet remain half a dozen families to be noticed. First comes the angler *par excellence* among birds, the heron. We may grumble at his depredations, but after all it is a pleasant belief that he eats more eels than trout; and does not every angler love to see his own thoughtful character reflected in the water-side heron? We must find room for two stanzas on this bird from a privately-printed angling book, written by one whose lines are as powerful as his rod, the author of 'The Lay of the Last Angler':—

See how he stalks along the pebbly strand,  
With keen eye watching each subaqueous motion;  
Wading knee-deep, for hours he will stand,  
Yet as for taking cold, he scorns the notion!

He needs no rod, nor line, nor fishing book,  
Although he makes his living on the water;  
He catches all his fish without a hook,  
And when he's 'gotten haud' he gives no quarter.

Among the *Scolopacidæ* come several birds which company with the angler in the low-lying boggy ground to which his vocation calls him; such as the curlew, whimbrel, green and common sandpiper, snipe and jacksnipe. The Eastern counties' fisher sees the former flying about in small companies in late autumn, while the whimbrel only appears on migration. If he goes to the north of Scotland he will find the former breeding and very noisy withal on the great moors; but the whimbrel flies much farther north for nesting purposes. The green and common sandpiper are on the East Anglian brooks all the summer, more or less; but the former has not been known to breed with us. The snipe does breed in fair numbers in England; but the little jacksnipe disappears in April for that important duty. Every country dweller, and certainly every fisherman, is familiar with the lapwing, which, with the oyster-catcher, may be considered the angler's birds among the *Charadriidæ*. The former is curiously irregular in his coming and going and in the fewness or the hundreds of his friends which he collects round him; but during March and April breeds in most

parishes where there are wide and spacious fields. The Findhorn and the oyster-catcher are connected mentally with us. Mr. St. John studied these birds on this river, and their pied plumage and red bill is the first sight of birds which attracts the angler who finds his way to that grand fishing stream. Of the *Rallidæ*, the landrail frequently soothes the angler in the Midland counties by its harsh yet grateful notes. Its congener, the water-rail, is sometimes seen; but the coot and water-hen are his most intimate friends from this family. The latter is a curious and amusing bird, frequently seeking our grass-plots and feeding even with the farmyard fowls in severe winters, but always associated in summer with the trout-stream. Rumours as dark as its own coat are current about the destruction it deals to trout ova. Having never dissected one in late autumn we can neither assert nor refute the statement; but should be grateful for any trustworthy information on the point. Even were the black charge proved, the bird's oddity would tempt us still to include it in our list of friends. It always reminds us of a little old woman in an antiquated black-silk bonnet, the ghost, let us say, of a modern old maid.

Of the *Anatidæ* the wild duck only is a familiar to the fisherman. Here again compassion takes the place of anger when he sees the alarmed mother splashing down some shallow river attended by her frightened brood, each little one diving, swimming, darting, splashing over its brother in haste to escape scrutiny. Of course these birds do much harm among trout spawn and trout fry, among salmon ova as well, say keepers; but old associations (if not Bird Bills) induce us to spare the wild duck. There will come a time when the bird visits England in frost and snow, and then gunners will render too true an account of him. Among the *Colymbidæ*, the little grebe and the large red-throated diver are probably the angler's only friends. He watches the former every here and there by rushy bank and shallow lagoon; the latter is identified in his mind with sundry Sutherlandshire lochs, where he sees during a summer holiday the old bird swimming about, 'barking,' as it were, at the intruder on her privacy, while her little one swims closely behind. Like all birds at such a time, the red-throated diver loses much of its shyness. As for the gulls, the black-headed, the common, and the herring-gull are occasionally seen by the angler haunting a reach of his river, or following the plough hard by to obtain worms. He does not usually associate, however, any of the *Laridæ* with his amusements.

These, then, are the chief, if not all, of the 'airy creatures'

dear to the angler. They are here recited to awake past pleasures in the minds of many old fishermen whom the tyranny of rheumatism keeps away from the waterside, and to remind those who can yet enjoy their charming recreation that all their feathered friends summer after summer will haunt the river and stream. Fervent is the welcome ready to be accorded them by all lovers of rod and line. 'Delaying long, delay no more!' Deep the joy which they excite so long as they condescend to stay.

M. G. WATKINS.

## Truth Triumphant.

'WHERE is Truth?' How many have asked the self-same question! how many will ask it to the end of time! how few will be more successful in their pursuit than the handsome young clergyman who, seated in a comfortable chair in the reading-room of the Grosvenor Library, put this question to the attendant and to various friends, and yet received no satisfactory answer! No one knew where truth was, no one even hazarded a suggestion as to where it might be, but one slim gentleman, who felt sure that one of the stout members of the Club must be sitting on it. Many stout members were present, glued to their chairs and happy with their newspapers, so with a sigh of vexation our clergyman gave up all hope of success. He had wanted a very different kind of truth from that sought after by philosophers; his was the 'Truth' we all know, covered in cold grey-green paper, who looks as if neither for kingdoms nor for empires would she utter anything short of an 'eternal veracity,' or lend her countenance to any statement not 'entirely verifical.'

Why did our excellent clergyman want this journal? He had been two hours in the reading-room already, had read his 'Spectator,' had skimmed the 'Saturday,' and a paper in the 'Nineteenth Century,' wondering the while how much longer the editor of that magazine was going to be in consulting its best interests and translating a certain article of his own from the limbo of slips to the beatific state of full-blown print. Was he now wishing to turn to 'Truth' as we turn to almonds and raisins after a pleasurable meal? Not so. He asked for the paper because he had a strong curiosity to see it; and when we say that, do not let any feminine reader measure his feeling by any sentiment of the kind which has ever agitated her own breast, for curiosity as felt by a woman is, even at its highest, 'as water unto wine' when compared with that which racks and torments the inner being of a man. He was curious, and he had been baulked of the satisfaction of his curiosity for one hour. An hour ago, he had looked up and had seen in an armchair on the far side of the room a pretty young lady of his acquaintance, lying back and enjoying a glimpse of this paper, which probably she did not often see. By her side was her mother, writing a letter. The girl was so pretty that he could not help looking at her. Some rays of smoky afternoon



sunshine were coming in at the window behind her; they had no strength to disturb her, but they set the picture for him. She, conscious of no observation, was quietly amusing herself with such small wares of literature as were set before her; but, just as he was about to revert to his magazine, a sudden change came over her. She started—at least, he was almost certain that she did—he was quite certain that she blushed violently, then she threw one quick and anxious glance in his direction, which arrived so straight at its destination that she must already have known he was there. His hand was shading his eyes, so she had no reason to suppose that he was cognisant of what she was doing, but she did not give herself time to think about that, but turned away instantly as if in terror, again looked at ‘Truth,’ but only as it appeared to him for one dismayed minute, then threw it down, and stood by her mother’s side till her note was ended, on which they left the room. That brief delay, however, lost Mr. Marjoribanks his chance of seeing ‘Truth.’ He had not liked to go and take it while they were still there, and someone else got hold of it. Mr. Marjoribanks could not help wondering what pretty Miss Grahame could have seen in that paper to disturb her so? She was the only child of one of his most influential parishioners, who lived very near the rectory. He had always liked her as well as, or better than, any other pretty girl in his cure of souls; he liked her father and mother too, and he delighted in their house. It was one of the large, old-fashioned ones which are still to be found in D——. The rectory was one of the same kind and abundantly appreciated by Mr. Marjoribanks, but the Grahames’ house was larger and more picturesque. It was pleasant, too, and homelike, and the rector often went there on Saturday when Mrs. Grahame was ‘at home.’ These afternoons were agreeable enough, especially in summer, when everyone went into the garden, which possessed every charm, from splendid old trees which would have graced a nobleman’s park, to the most romantically secluded shady walks, and a lawn which looked like a broad expanse of lovely velvet. Mrs. Grahame was never so happy as when, to use her own phrase, her ‘lawn was well furnished,’ *i.e.* dotted all over with happy groups of well-dressed people. Mr. Marjoribanks had a large garden and likewise a spacious lawn, but his lawn was not often ‘furnished’ with anyone so pretty as Miss Dorothy Grahame. She was more than pretty, she was beautiful, and doubly beautiful when she blushed. What had made her change colour so suddenly when reading ‘Truth’? He asked himself this repeatedly, and as he went down Bond Street resolved to stop at the first news-agent’s and buy a copy of the paper, but immediately afterwards he met

some friends and fell into a conversation which made him forget all else. Finally, he had to hurry home to dress for a dinner at Hampstead. To dine at Hampstead is a step which, to those who do not keep a carriage, involves considerable mental anguish. The cabman invariably mistakes his way, and at the very time when your watch tells you you ought to be sitting down to dinner at the summit of that terrible hill, you are meandering about in deep uncertainty in level streets at the base of it, not knowing where to begin your attack on its steepness. After which, your driver zigzags slowly upwards with a regard for his horse which you would heartily applaud if you did not know that you were inflicting pain on a yet nobler creature—your unfortunate hostess.

Mr. Marjoribanks was a man who piqued himself on punctuality, and he was twenty minutes late!

‘I forgive you,’ said his hostess. ‘Indeed, there is nothing to forgive. The Grahames are not here yet: we must wait for them.’

‘The Duncan Grahames?’ inquired Mr. Marjoribanks.

‘Yes. Do you know them? Oh, of course you do—they are your own parishioners. By the by, you are to take in Miss Grahame.’

‘And now,’ thought Mr. Marjoribanks, ‘I shall perhaps find out what made her blush so—at least, of course I shall not—she is not likely to tell me, and I can’t ask her.’

The Grahames arrived: good genial Mr. Grahame, with a smile for all on ordinary occasions, but nervous to-night under the sense of being late; Mrs. Grahame in black velvet, full of excuses and apologies; and Miss Dorothy in light blue and pale pink roses.

She surely was not blushing again! Mr. Marjoribanks almost thought that she did so the moment she caught sight of him, and then he began to feel as if this blush would save him the trouble of inquiring into the cause of the other, for she had evidently a habit of changing colour. He had been told that he was to take her in to dinner, and was just making his way across the room so as to be at hand at the critical moment, when he heard Mrs. Grahame say in a low voice to the mistress of the house, who appeared to be an intimate friend of hers, ‘That’s what made us so late—it upset us.’

‘Naturally. I can understand that.’

Mr. Marjoribanks wanted to pass these ladies to get to Miss Dorothy, but did not like to go nearer while they were discussing this grievance. ‘Some treasure of a servant is leaving them,’

thought he ; some stray word of Mrs. Grahame's seemed to point to that class of misfortune, and he knew that her sphere of joy and sorrow was entirely marked out and bounded by the walls of the garden in which her home stood—nothing which did not affect some member of her household could affect her. Suddenly his hostess came to him and said, 'I have made a stupid mistake—I said you were to take Miss Grahame in to dinner, and I find I was wrong—it is Miss Gateacre you are to take—let me introduce you.' Then he, whose face was set in the direction of pretty Miss Dorothy, had to turn round and smile cheerfully when confronted by a worse fate.

What a drop from Miss Grahame to Miss Gateacre ! For Miss Dorothy was a beauty, and Miss Gateacre was neither a beauty now, nor had she been one at any period of the last half-century. He sat on the same side of the table as Miss Dorothy, and could not see her during dinner. Miss Gateacre was a great traveller, and had spent years in the East. She had brought even too much information home with her. Perhaps all the gentlemen had had instructive ladies by their side during dinner—none of them seemed inclined to leave the dining-room. When they did go, most of the ladies were in the inner drawing-room, Miss Grahame and one or two others in the smaller by which the gentlemen entered. Seeing her there, Mr. Marjoribanks took a seat near her. She had not looked up as they passed through the room, but when she saw who had taken this place she blushed. He felt quite angry with her for being so childishly stupid, and wished he had gone into the other room with the rest. She was pretty, but it was absurd to blush so ; if she behaved in that way, she would make it quite impossible for him or anyone else to speak to her ! Her mother ought to talk to her—but that was the worst of it ; her mother was an excellent woman, but as ignorant as a baby of the ways of the world.

'I know why you are blushing,' said he, trying to find some excuse for her to which she could cling for support. 'You are ashamed of my having seen you reading "Truth," and looking so happy with it.'

Miss Grahame looked utterly dismayed—nothing less than dismayed. Tears of confusion rose to her eyes, and a blush whose strength amazed him overspread her face. All those which had gone before had been as nothing unto this. Before he could speak she rose, and murmuring something of which he could hear only 'Find mamma,' hastily left him and went into the other room.

The state of Mr. Marjoribanks's mind may be imagined. He was

simply overwhelmed. Had she taken leave of her senses? What had he done? What could she have taken amiss? He could arrive at no solution of this inquiry. The only obvious one was that there was some extremely unpleasant bit of scandal in this week's 'Truth' which she had read, and she was ashamed of having been seen with the paper in her hand; but she was such a good, innocent girl, that he dismissed this idea at once. She might read the most atrocious publications of the day, and not know that there was anything amiss in them. He sat pretending to turn over some photographs until an opportunity occurred of saying good-bye without entering the other room, and then he availed himself of it at once.

There is only one thing more difficult than going to Hampstead to dine, and that is to return home when dinner is over. When you go, you can get a cab; when you return, everything is abysmal uncertainty. Cabs there may be, but how are they to be found? Railway stations there are, but how is the obscurity in which they lurk to be penetrated? Mr. Marjoribanks made his way to the main street—a gentleman was asking a policeman how to find a railway-station—the rector recognised a friend, and at once professed his readiness to guide him; a readiness hampered only by one fact—that he did not know the way himself.

'What a beastly hole this Hampstead is!' said his friend.

'I call that a beautiful bit of descriptive word-painting,' said the rector; 'you will never surpass that! A hole!—an inferior mind can't see anything in Hampstead but its hill! Where are you going?'

'To the Athenæum. Where would you have me go?'

'Don't be so fierce! I was not going to suggest home to bed. I'll go to the Athenæum, too. There's a hansom, don't let us lose it.'

At the Athenæum, Mr. Marjoribanks at last obtained possession of 'Truth.' After all, so far as he could see, he had given himself a great deal of trouble for nothing. He had begun at the beginning, and had read three entire pages, but had seen nothing at all blush-compelling, when suddenly, on turning a new page, his eyes fell on one sentence which seemed to dart up at him from the rest as if it had some special concern with him. And yet it was some time before he was positively certain that it really did refer to himself. He read it over and over again, word for word. 'We are informed on excellent authority, that the Hon. and Rev. Miles Hylton Marjoribanks, Rector of D——, will shortly lead to the hymeneal altar Miss Grahame, only daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Duncan Grahame, of Colebrooke House, D——, and Millfield Court,

Lancashire.' This was what she had seen in 'Truth'—this had caused her many blushes. And he had accused her of having been made happy by the sight of this! Here was a pleasant situation for a man who was extremely tenacious of the good opinion of every man, woman, and child of his acquaintance, and the desire of whose heart was to pass through life as a Christian gentleman who had never consciously inflicted a moment's pain on any human being! He at once wrote to the editor of 'Truth,' to request him to contradict this perfectly unfounded report, which must be extremely annoying both to Miss Grahame and her family. That done, he went home, and, in spite of numerous letters of congratulation which had arrived during his absence, tried to forget the matter, and the fact that she too would have such letters. Surely Miss Grahame would know that he had not seen that paragraph when he spoke so foolishly to her. Of course he did not go to the Grahame's on Saturday—of course he felt very uncomfortable at the thought of Sunday, when the three sittings for which Mr. Grahame paid would be occupied by three people who were all made uncomfortable by their clergyman's presence, and who would rejoice to hear of his being appointed to a colonial bishopric. Mr. Marjoribanks did not want preferment *in partibus*—he had a strong regard for a civilisation which has already made some progress. Soon after he had taken his place at the reading-desk he glanced at the Grahames. They looked coldly resolute. Mr. Grahame stood up with breast expanded and head thrown back, as if to say to injurious calumny, 'Strike at this bold breast, and not at an unprotected girl.' His voice, which usually joined in the psalmody with melodious warmth and friendly disregard of time, was mute. Mrs. Grahame looked stiff and unbending. Miss Dorothy never raised her eyes, much less her bird-like voice. How terrible to have to stand for hours with these Medusa-like heads in front of him! He felt Gorgonised already. Then he remembered where he was, and forgot the Grahames altogether.

It was difficult to forget the Grahames long. There were so many things to remind him of them. He had promised to spend a couple of days in a pleasant house on the Thames. The Grahames were to be there at the same time. Mr. Marjoribanks wrote to say that unforeseen parish business would detain him in London. He lost his visit, and the Grahames were very angry with him for not letting them do the work of showing that there was no truth in the report that he was engaged to their daughter. This he learnt from Mrs. Wilton, a friend of his and also of the Grahames. 'My dear Mr. Marjoribanks,' she said, not without some enjoyment of her pastor's troubles, 'they are furious with

you! Mr. Grahame will never forgive you for having been in such a hurry to disclaim the engagement! He says you might have considered that such a report was just as disagreeable to them as to you, and have left them to contradict it; and that when he went to the newspaper office and found that you had already written to deny it, he was mortified beyond expression to find himself anticipated by you. He feels that the contradiction ought to have come from the young lady's friends, and that your haste seems to imply that you hated the idea of being capable of making such a marriage! He knows you are a man of family, he says, but thinks that his family need not have been treated in such an insulting manner! I am telling you exactly what he said—it is better.'

'Much better. But I am amazed! I never expected him to be so stupid! I thought I was acting in the very way likely to be acceptable to him.'

'You made a great mistake! He thinks that you could not be easy till you had proclaimed that you wished for no connection with his family—that you detested the idea of your name being associated with that of the daughter of a self-made man!'

The expression irritated Mr. Marjoribanks, who was rather a purist in language. 'A self-made man!' he echoed; 'he was born penniless, and had the brains to make a fortune—that's what people call a self-made man. The clever men made themselves, and God made the fools! Well, Mr. Grahame does not show his brains now. He is absurd! It was my duty to contradict that report, and I did contradict it, and you will never persuade me that I did wrong.'

'And you will never persuade Mr. Grahame that you did right,' replied Mrs. Wilton. 'He is bitterly offended; and when he takes an idea into his head, no power on earth will remove it. Now, if you fell desperately in love with his daughter, which you are not at all likely to do, I am persuaded that he would never give his consent.'

'And why am I not likely to do it?'

'Because, though you won't own it, you do look down on trade and business men! We all know that—she knows it too. But to return to Mr. Grahame. You have done another thing to enrage him—you have given up your visit to Sunbury!'

'But you wouldn't have had me go to Sunbury?'

'I am not talking about what I would have had. I say he is furious at your again taking the initiative. You should, he thinks, have left him to do all that was required.'

‘He is an idiot! However, I am sorry if I have hurt his feelings. I will write and explain.’

Mr. Marjoribanks did write and explain, and very kindly and politely; but his letter only appeared to make Mr. Grahame more angry, and in the answer he sent it was only too apparent that he intended to drop his rector’s acquaintance altogether.

‘Of course he means to cut you,’ said Mrs. Wilton cheerily, when she saw the letter (quarrels between friends are lively things). ‘Didn’t you know that? I have always thought you had a very inadequate conception of his feeling on the subject.’

‘But he can’t help knowing me. We sit side by side at parish meetings, at least twice a week. He is my right-hand man; he is an excellent business man, and liberal with his money. Whether he likes it or not, he and I must seem to be friends.’

‘He will go to no more meetings, and I don’t suppose he will go to your church, either.’

‘He won’t leave St. Mary’s! He doesn’t like St. Jude’s. It is ill-ventilated, he says.’

‘St. Jude’s! But he will go to the Wesleyan chapel, if he leaves your church.’

Even cheerful Mrs. Wilton could not but be touched at the emotion her rector showed when she said this—he was dismayed! ‘I will write to him again. I will do anything rather than drive him to that,’ said he.

Next day, however, before he had time to write, he met the Grahames driving. He bowed. Mr. and Mrs. Grahame both deliberately cut him; Miss Dorothy did not look up. This was horrible! Was he, who preached peace and goodwill to men, to be on bad terms with a member of his flock, or indeed with anyone? He again wrote to Mr. Grahame, and once more assured him of his entire innocence of all intention to offend. What is more, he went to Mrs. Wilton, and entreated her, as a friend of both parties, to go forth as an emissary of peace, and to explain to Mr. Grahame that he himself had only done what was usual, but that it gave him the greatest pain to know that Mr. Grahame and his family were hurt by his conduct.

Mr. Grahame loftily replied that he was quite willing to forgive Mr. Marjoribanks, but not to renew his acquaintance with him; furthermore, he added, that he did not see that his forgiveness need take the shape of bowing to him when they met. This to Mrs. Wilton. Mr. Marjoribanks himself received no reply to his letter, and naturally did not feel that the situation was at all changed. ‘He has the vices as well as the virtues of his race,’ said the rector, when his dove returned without an olive-branch.

'When a Scotchman once declares that forgiveness is impossible, he is proud of his own hard-heartedness and cultivates it as his most cherished possession. They are a horrible people when this mood comes over them! Was Mrs. Grahame as unforgiving as he?'

'I think so. She pinched her lips tightly together, and said that "very high families had been only too glad to intermarry with the Grahames!" You seem to have no curiosity to know what poor little Dolly said!'

'Oh yes, I have. I am sorry for her—this must be intensely disagreeable to her; but I am afraid that she thinks as they do, that the best way of proving there is no truth in the report, is to pass me by without speaking.'

'Her mother told me that she cried for an hour after they did that the other day. She wanted them to bow, and says you did nothing wrong, and that they ought to remember that such reports are as disagreeable to a man as to a woman.'

Mr. Marjoribanks was again silent. His thoughts were lingering caressingly on pretty Miss Dorothy. Now that he was deprived of her acquaintance, he could not but feel that if he was never to be allowed to see her again, he would miss one of his chief pleasures. 'I am glad she took a reasonable view,' said he, trying to shake off this fit of sentimentality. 'They will soon bring her round to theirs, though.'

'I doubt it. With all Dolly's sweetness, she can be very firm.

'They can all be firm,' said he angrily.

'What are you going to do about the father, Mr. Marjoribanks? That is the thing to consider now.'

'Nothing! I can do no more.'

The very next Sunday Mr. Grahame took his family to a red-brick Bethel which stood up in four-square ugliness in one of the new streets of D—. Mr. Marjoribanks, who firmly believed that salvation could only be found within the pale of the Anglican Church, feared that his own want of tact had driven three very promising souls into the net of perdition. This was but the beginning, too, of the discord which grew up between these three wandering sheep and their shepherd. Mr. Marjoribanks strongly supported the orthodox candidate when he solicited re-election on the School Board. Mr. Grahame was just as zealous in promoting the return of a gentleman who ostentatiously avowed his repugnance to all forms of worship. Under other circumstances, Mr. Grahame would have voted 'for the rector's man,' not because he saw the matter from the rector's point of view, but because the rector was a good fellow and had at least as much



truth on his side as any other religious teacher, and put it forward pleasantly, which some of them did not. Now, however, Mr. Grahame worked tooth and nail for the opposing candidate—spent five or six hundred pounds, and finally, as Mr. Marjoribanks did not hesitate to say, ‘placarded an infidel into power and place.’

The result of the struggle was a terrible mortification to the rector. ‘That pestilential fellow Grahame did it,’ said he to Mrs. Wilton, for by this time his adjectives had not only increased in calibre, but were much more in request. ‘His money carried all before him! Did you see Mrs. Grahame driving infirm old women to the poll in her carriage; and Miss Grahame, too!’

‘Now, don’t say poor Dolly did anything to spite you, for she didn’t,’ said Mrs. Wilton, very eagerly.

Something in her tone made the rector scan her face narrowly, but he saw nothing there, and said, ‘I shall hate the School Board worse than ever, now!’

Very soon afterwards he hated it still more, for the Board began to agitate for the erection of large new schools in D——, and the site which they proposed was near the back of the rectory. In former days, Mr. Grahame and the rector, together, were so powerful, that if they could not have put an end to the project altogether, they could at any rate have placed the school at a greater distance. Mr. Marjoribanks, alone, was comparatively powerless. Mr. Grahame favoured the scheme for building. The schools were run up in no time. They were of red brick, and possessed of many ambitious architectural features. They were very high, too; so the unfortunate rector could not help seeing them from every window at the back of his house. The playground, large and asphalted, ran back till it touched the wall of the rectory garden, and if in an unguarded moment the rector walked at that end of his grounds, balls descended on him, cries met his ears, and words not received in his vocabulary asserted their claim to a place in the English language. This, too, he characterised as ‘the work of that low dissenting fellow, Grahame!’ and brooded over the vexation.

Thus passed months—months composed of days most of which were embittered by more and more frequently recurring collisions between Mr. Grahame and the rector. If the richest, most business-like and energetic inhabitant of a parish chooses to quarrel with his rector and seek every opportunity of thwarting him, opportunities are apt to present themselves. Mr. Marjoribanks, a dignified scholarlike gentleman, with a keen hatred of contention and of all that is petty and degrading, began to feel

his life a burden to him. Against his will he was compelled either to dispute with Mr. Grahame, or let things be done in his parish of which he disapproved. Mr. Grahame's opposition was continuous—it amounted to persecution. It brought with it a host of vexations, not the least of which was that Mr. Marjoribanks found his mind perpetually occupied by irritating trifles. He tried to banish them, but the hateful things returned, insomuch that his whole life was fretted and galled, and yet his conscience reproached him for feeling to anyone as he could not but feel towards the destroyer of his peace.

Meantime the Grahames were happy. He heard of pretty Miss Dorothy queening it at bachelors' balls at Cambridge, or going down to Oxford and being the mark of every compliment at Commemoration, or being admired at Royal garden parties. Yes, the Grahames had even helped to 'furnish' the Prince of Wales's lawn, and very sure Mr. Marjoribanks felt, when he heard of it, that Miss Dorothy had been its brightest ornament. With all his admiration of her beauty, he took every possible care to avoid any opportunity of refreshing his memory of it by seeing her again. Her eyes would not look the prettier for being filled with scorn of himself if they happened to rest upon him; and alas, if she was her father's daughter, that was what he would see! In losing the friendship of the father, Mr. Marjoribanks had likewise lost the services of the one lady in his parish who knew how to decorate a church artistically. On the eve of every festival Miss Grahame had appeared with a basket of flowers, and, what was still more important, she always stayed to arrange them. Now, the work was left to people who had no idea how to do it, and the church looked frightful just when it ought to have looked its best. It was not that there was any lack of flowers, for when Mrs. Wilton heard her beloved rector lament the goodly basketful which once came from Colebrooke House, she had said that never should a due supply of flowers be wanting, for she herself would provide them; and admirably she had kept her word. Henceforth, as soon as the work of decoration began, Mrs. Wilton's contribution appeared. Frequently she herself brought it. Her flowers were even finer than those the Grahames had sent. She brought splendid large clusters of waxlike stephanotis, regal bunches of roses, and a profusion of passion-flowers and lilies—some conservatory must have been rifled of all it contained, yet Mrs. Wilton had neither greenhouse nor garden. 'But that's of no consequence,' said she; 'I was kind to the Duke of ——'s gardener when he was ill, and now I may have whatever I want.' Mr. Marjoribanks was grateful to her; but fine as the flowers were, they did not look half so

well as those which had been manipulated by Miss Dorothy's pretty fingers.

On the Saturday before Trinity Sunday he was returning from a distant part of his parish, none the happier for the knowledge that it was proposed to run tramways through its main street, and fearing 'that odious Grahame' would see in the project fresh leverage for annoying him. His way led him by St. Mary's, and he went in to see how the work of decoration was progressing.

'Oh, Mr. Marjoribanks, we are in such difficulty about flowers, this time!' said a lady as soon as she saw him.

'I'll go to the nearest shop and send you some.'

'It seems a pity to buy flowers—Mrs. Wilton's may come any moment. I had a note this morning from Wivenham to tell me they would be sent as usual. She never failed before! Her servants must have made some mistake!'

'Can't we send for them?' suggested Mr. Marjoribanks.

'If we sent a boy, he would spoil them, and we are so busy!'

'I'll go,' said the rector, and went. Mrs. Wilton was at her country house, near Reading, or the difficulty would not have arisen. He walked quickly, and soon reached the house. At the first mention of flowers, Mrs. Wilton's servant burst into a torrent of excuses. She knew about them, she had been told about them by Mrs. Wilton when she went away, and had had a message, besides, that very morning. It was no neglect of hers if they had not been taken to the church sooner, for she had been dressed to go with them for an hour and a half, but they had only just come. She supposed that they were so late because Miss Grahame was away; when she was at home, they always came about twelve—indeed, she generally brought them to Mrs. Wilton's herself.

'What was the message you had this morning?' he asked, doing his best not to show too much interest in the revelations that the girl was making.

'That I was to carry them to the church as soon as they came from Mr. Grahame's, and to say that they came from Mrs. Wilton.'

So these, and all the flowers which had of late been so lavishly bestowed on St. Mary's, were the gift of Miss Dorothy, and she it was who had stripped her greenhouses bare to embellish his church! Mrs. Wilton had kept the secret well. The rector was amazed at this discovery. A hundred thoughts rushed through his mind, all of which seemed strange to him. 'Give me the basket,' said he with an air of indifference; 'I'll take it to the ladies at once. They are waiting for it. I can walk quicker than you.'

He hung on her answer as if she had the power of granting or withholding a great privilege; he wanted to carry those flowers himself. She gave him the basket, and he hurried away, thinking he had never seen such bright flowers—never smelt such sweet ones. If Miss Grahame did this, she could have no such feelings with regard to himself as he had imputed to her. How strange! The greenhouses were her special domain. How bare they must look now! Was this act of sacrifice prompted by a desire to atone for the way in which her father behaved? Mrs. Wilton always said that Dorothy Grahame did not feel as her father did; he had never believed it. He gave up the flowers at the church door and went home, but he was thoughtful all night and next day also. Above everything, he wanted to see Mrs. Wilton. She could explain what required explanation, but she was out of town, and he did not like to write to her. Monday evening found him still wondering whether the most sensible thing to do would not be to run down to Wivenham and talk to her. He took his pen and wrote: 'You have generously given me leave to come to you when I am free. I am free now, and will be with you soon after luncheon to-morrow, Tuesday. I must leave on Thursday. I will sleep at the little inn if your house is full. Thanks for the kindness which enables me to write as one sure of welcome.' He sent this to the post, but next day found that there was a meeting about the tramway nuisance, which he must attend. He telegraphed to Mrs. Wilton not to expect him, and gave up the idea of going to Wivenham for some time, for now he would have to enlist all the strength of his parish to combat this act of aggression on the part of nineteenth-century civilisation. The meeting was a stormy one. Mr. Marjoribanks began to see on all sides proofs that an enemy was steadily destroying his influence in the parish; however, just as all seemed hopeless, the tramway project fell to the ground for awhile, owing to some flaw in the procedure, and the rector once more breathed freely.

Why should he not go to the Wiltons? He hurried home; bade one man pack his portmanteau and another bring a hansom, and at five was on his way to Reading. There was a seven miles' drive from Reading to Wivenham, which he reached just in time to dress for dinner. The Wiltons had a dinner-party that evening, so he did not expect to be able to say much to Mrs. Wilton till next day. He had just time to apologise for taking her by surprise, and say, 'I want to speak to you about the Grahames.'

'I suppose they are as disagreeable as ever?' said she.

'Well, I hardly know,' was his answer, and it surprised her. The guests began to arrive, and no more could be said. Suddenly

Mr. Marjoribanks heard something which interested him. Sir James Allport, a bachelor baronet, exclaimed, 'I say, Wilton, didn't you tell me that your pretty friend was staying till the end of the week?' Neither the baronet nor the rector heard any answer to this, for dinner was announced. A very agreeable set of people sat round the table, and there was a sense of freshness and purity about the air which was infinitely soothing to Mr. Marjoribanks, who was tired of London dust and parish discord. He was talking happily enough to the lady by his side, when he heard Sir James recommence the attack by saying, 'My dear Wilton, you never gave me an answer when I asked what had become of your pretty visitor. She told me herself that she was not going away till the end of the week.'

Mr. Marjoribanks looked up; a secret sense had already informed him that this 'pretty visitor' was Miss Grahame, and he was so convinced of the fact that no further proof was required. So certain was he of this, that seeing Mr. Wilton was struggling how to evade giving an answer while his attention was on the alert, he took pity on him, and turned and talked to a lady on the other side, and thus freed his host from embarrassment. At the same time, however, he could not resist glancing at his hostess, and saw what he expected to see, that she was anxiously watching to discover if he was on the track of her secret. If anything interesting was now being said, he made no attempt to hear it; he knew perfectly well that Miss Grahame was in the house, and saw how everything had happened. She was staying with the Wiltons when the letter arrived in which he announced his visit. She had then probably decided to leave them, but had been betrayed into staying on by the arrival of the telegram in which he had said he could not come. Then, when he appeared so unexpectedly, late in the evening, she had no other means of escape than to confine herself to her own room. He knew it; he was sure of it; he wanted no further proof.

'Let me have ten minutes' conversation with you when these people are gone,' said he, snatching an opportunity of speaking to his hostess in the drawing-room.

'I will if possible, but some of them will stay late, and I have two or three things to do.'

'Yes, I know you have,' said he. 'You will have to go and see if the recluse has been dull.'

'My dear Mr. Marjoribanks——'

'I know Miss Grahame is here. Why could she not come down?'

'You would both have been very uncomfortable if she had! But I must not talk now,' said she, glancing uneasily round.

'Don't go—those people know we are old friends and have not met for some time. I am sorry I have come so inopportunistically. I'll go early in the morning, and return some other time. Tell Miss Grahame that I only came for one night and must go by the eleven o'clock train.'

'She won't believe me. She knows you meant to stay a couple of days. We will arrange the thing somehow—I'll see you later. I must go to that old lady on the sofa, she is so touchy!'

They had no further conversation that night, for it was impossible to find an opportunity. Mr. Marjoribanks said a few words to his host, but all that he could draw from him was that 'the poor girl was miserably uncomfortable! She was better out of the way. She feels ashamed of the way her family have treated you. She packed to go home when your letter came yesterday morning, and was just going off when your telegram set her mind at rest again. That's how it happened—it's no one's fault, but it is unfortunate.'

'Yes,' said the rector, 'most unfortunate; but I am obliged to go back to town in the morning.'

'We'll see, we'll see; neither you nor she have any ill-will to each other. Much better stay where you are and make the best of it,' said Mr. Wilton; and then they both went to bed.

That is not quite true, for the rector sat down and wrote a note to Mrs. Wilton to tell her how much he regretted having placed Miss Grahame in so uncomfortable a position, and that under the circumstances he would take the only course open to him, and leave the house before anyone was astir. 'Assure her,' wrote he, 'that I have no feeling towards her which would prevent me from enjoying a pleasant visit under the same roof with her, and that I leave this place only out of consideration for her. I shall be gone when you receive this. I leave my portmanteau behind me—it can be sent later in the day.' Having written this, he went to bed and slept till early morning. Then he rose, packed his portmanteau, put his note in a prominent place so that the servant might see it when he came into the room, and then he opened the window. What a dull morning it was—he had not had time to think about it before. The garden below was all but shrouded in gloom—it was a strangely ugly-looking morning—nothing looked well. There was a balcony before his window, and some steps led from it down to the garden. By this way he left Wivenham. He did not suppose many of the servants were astir, but if they were, and saw him, they would only imagine that he was taking an early stroll. He would have no breakfast—hear no remonstrance, but would quietly depart, and leave Miss Grahame

as much mistress of her own movements as she had been before he came to disturb them. He walked down the garden towards a door which opened into the lane. There was a strange sense of oppression outside the house. The sky was overcast, and the air heavily laden with the scent of flowers. The roses were hanging their heads—the weight of pearly drops which clung to them was almost too much for them.

‘Well, it’s better than London,’ thought he. ‘We should smell nothing so nice as roses there! If only it does not rain!’

In his desire to escape unseen, he had not gone downstairs to fetch either his great-coat or umbrella. But why should it rain? It often looked like this in the country, and afterwards the sun broke out in twofold splendour. He gained the high road, and then he knew that a walk of seven miles would take him to Reading. It was now past six—the train went at eight. ‘I wish it had been fine,’ thought he. ‘When one does get up at such untimely hours they ought to be pleasant.’

It was anything but pleasant! It grew worse. A dense wall of dingy-looking cloud barred him from the sight of the sky—the air he breathed was sluggish and uninvigorating. All about him was unnatural. The birds did not sing or fly, but darted restlessly from branch to branch, with a sharp dissatisfied twitter. The green of every shrub and tree seemed heavy and overcharged with colour. He found himself thinking of Mrs. Browning’s beautiful ‘Romance of Margaret’ and the lines,

All little birds do sit with heads beneath their wings;  
Nature doth seem, in a mystic dream,  
Absorbed from her living things.

What was about to happen? If he had been reading a description of such a day in a novel, he would of course have known that it was his author’s way of leading up to a murder. Was a violent storm about to break, or was it only the way this day took to announce that it intended to be the very hottest of the whole year? This dismal weight of atmosphere must betoken something. It was difficult for the rector to brace himself up to walking fast enough to reach the station by eight o’clock, but he did his best. He had scarcely walked a mile before a rain-drop as big as a shilling fell on the sleeve of his coat, and when he raised his head to the blanket-like something which for the moment was pleased to expect to be called the sky, another of equal calibre alighted on his left cheek. He doubled his speed, and soon got into a long lane bordered with magnificent elms which overhung the road so thoroughly that drops large or small were of trifling

importance ; but soon a low reverberating growl announced to him that the sky above had mischief on hand, and that he, an umbrellaless man, had better not lose a moment. After all, the thunder did not seem in any particular hurry to put forth its strength. He walked on another mile without hearing more than a few low but savage growls, but the rain began to fall in earnest, and before long, torrents seemed to descend. What was he to do ? He was under the shelter of thick trees now, but soon their protection would fail him, and once beyond it in such a storm as this, he would be drenched. It was impossible to go farther, and yet, if he waited, he would lose the train. He crept under a sycamore which branched out so thickly and regularly on all sides of its massive trunk that when under it he felt himself beneath a gigantic umbrella ; but before he had ceased to congratulate himself on such good quarters he began to feel them insecure, for a terrific peal of thunder broke from the sky overhead, and it was instantly followed by a fiery arrow which seemed specially aimed at him. Before he had recovered from the shock of this, a brougham rolled by. Two servants were outside it cowering beneath a huge umbrella, but the carriage was gone before he had framed a wish that those inside it might have sufficient kindness to offer him a seat. Another rattling peal of thunder and another angry flash of forked lightning drove everything out of his mind but the danger of his position. He must get away from that tree, but where was he to go, and what to do ?

The carriage had turned back, and was leaving the road to come close to him. It stopped, and a servant—a very drenched one—got down from the box, and came to him with an umbrella, saying, ‘Miss Grahame wishes to know if you will get into the carriage, sir : she told me to say that it was Mr. Wilton’s.’

Mr. Marjoribanks was too much startled to answer promptly.

‘You had better not stay under the tree, sir ; come under my umbrella,’ said the servant, and drew the rector away with him—he himself dreaded the neighbourhood of the tree. He opened the carriage door, and with a ‘Make haste, sir, or you’ll get wet through,’ almost pushed Mr. Marjoribanks in ; and thus, before he had made up his mind whether to accept this offer or not, he found himself sitting by the side of the very girl from whom he was making such haste to escape.

She seemed afraid to raise her eyes to his face, but said nervously, ‘I thought—I hoped, I mean—that you would not mind sharing Mr. Wilton’s carriage with me. It is such a terrible storm ! I hardly knew you when I passed—I mean, I did not expect to see you here—but that dreadful clap of thunder made me come



back—oh, there's another!' and she, whose words had been confused enough before, now lost all power of speech and hid her face in her hands.

'It really is a very violent storm,' said he; 'I don't know how to thank you sufficiently for extricating me from a position that was not altogether safe. I knew it was wrong to stay there, but I had no other protection against the rain.'

She looked up timidly, and said: 'You know it is the Wiltons' carriage?' Her words sounded inconsequent, but he understood what she meant, and said gently: 'I know it is their carriage, but I hope you don't think that I would not have accepted a seat in yours if you had offered it to me under similar circumstances?'

'In mine? oh, I could not have ventured to offer that!' Another peal of thunder and another derangement of her nerves prevented him from making any reply to this. When she had partly recovered, she said: 'But I am taking you in the wrong direction! I am going to the railway station, and you must be wanting to get back to Wivenham for breakfast!'

'I? No, I want to catch the eight o'clock train to London. I was walking to the station, when this storm surprised me.'

'You were? You are going away! It is my fault—oh, I am so sorry!' Her cheeks, which the moment before had been bleached with fear, now flamed crimson, and tears of shame rose to her eyes.

'Indeed, it is not your fault,' said he kindly; 'I am obliged to return home sooner than I intended.' He did not think that she heard what he was saying, for again the thunder was crashing overhead, and she was shivering with fear of the lightning.

'Oh!' she exclaimed, with a long-drawn-out sigh,—'oh, how terrible!'

'I am obliged to return home sooner than I intended; it really is not your fault,' said he, repeating his words, for he was so sorry for her.

She shook her head, and replied: 'Don't say that. No letters have come since you came—but, Mr. Marjoribanks, when you know that I am going away—I shall be gone directly, and you can go back to Wivenham in the carriage.'

She seemed so distressed at having spoilt his visit, that he hastened to say, 'Indeed, you must not think that I have any feeling towards you but regard—I am——'

'Oh, I know what you must think of us all; but we need not both go away. Let the carriage take me to the station, and go back to the Wiltons and finish your visit. I can go again any time.'

He shook his head.

‘You won’t? Oh, how I do wish this had not happened!’

He was afraid she was going to cry, but she only wiped away one tear, which had far more effect than a thousand, for she was so anxious to hide it. Before he could say a word to reassure her, she exclaimed impetuously: ‘Whatever I try to do turns out ill! I hoped to get away before you were up. I arranged everything last night with Mrs. Wilton. How did you get away? How is it that no one knew you were leaving? I could have spared you this meeting if I had but known what you were doing.’

‘My dear Miss Grahame, you speak as if it were a misery to me to meet you. Have I ever avoided you? Am I the one who showed a wish to put an end——’

‘No, of course not. It’s papa, I know, but we can’t talk of that! It has made me very uncomfortable!’

‘It has made me much more so. It has caused me suffering of every kind.’

‘Yes, I was afraid so. Mr. Marjoribanks, you don’t think that I refused to bow to you because I wished to behave ill to you? There—I wanted to say that, and I have said it. Now we had better say no more; we can’t alter things.’

‘Thank you,’ said he; ‘I am grateful for what you have said, and I perfectly believe it;’ he looked at her in thoughtful admiration.

‘Try not to mind what papa does,’ she added nervously. ‘Mrs. Wilton told me you felt it terribly.’

‘I don’t care the least what he does,’ he began in some confusion. ‘I mean, I can bear it quite well when I know that you, for whom I have always had a genuine regard and admiration, have spoken as you have done now.’

She raised questioning eyes to his eyes—he said that he had a genuine regard for her—that was a great deal for him to say. He looked as if it were true. He looked as if still more was true—her eyes fell, and she sighed, for it was in vain to wonder about the meanings of a man whom she was never likely to see again.

‘You don’t doubt that?’ he asked. ‘It is true, and has become more true than ever lately!’

She looked up with a regretful expression. ‘It can’t be helped,’ she said.

‘That we cannot be friends, you mean?’ said he.

She made no answer.

‘I suppose we can’t see each other, but I rely on your being as much of a friend as you can to me.’

'You may rely.'

'And I would do anything in the world to serve you,' said he earnestly.

'Begging your pardon, ma'am,' said the footman, suddenly opening the door, 'but that's your train just agoing. We have been hurrying all we could to be in time, but we couldn't get on any faster along of the roads being so heavy.'

The train which was to have been hers was sending up great puffs of smoke in the now lightened air—for the storm was nearly over.

Miss Grahame looked at the rector—dismay was on her face. There was no dismay in his—he did not care what went off without him, so long as she did not.

'How long shall we have to wait for the next, William?'

'Till eleven, ma'am,' said he, and sneezed violently.

'Don't stand there, William,' said she. 'Your clothes are wet through! You will be ill, I am afraid, and so will the coachman. And you are wet, too, Mr. Marjoribanks! What have I been thinking of, not to see it? Do me a favour—a great favour. Only a minute ago you said you would do anything to serve me; come back in the carriage to Wivenham; you will be so ill if you keep those wet clothes on. If you refuse—I shall——'

'But I don't refuse!' said he. 'William, tell the coachman to drive back to Wivenham.' And then he said to Miss Grahame: 'Can't you see that I should be only too glad to go to the end of the world with you?'

Mrs. Wilton, calm, collected, and pretty as usual, was writing notes and admiring the fine sky which the storm had left behind it, when she saw the carriage drive up to the door. 'Why, here is Dolly back again!' she exclaimed to herself. 'I suppose she found out that Mr. Marjoribanks had forestalled her! How pleased Sir James will be!' She hurried to the hall-door to receive her with a few words of friendly banter, but, to her astonishment, saw that the rector was there too. No sooner did Miss Dolly see Mrs. Wilton than, muttering something which sounded like 'Mr. Marjoribanks will tell you,' she darted upstairs to her own room, leaving Mrs. Wilton looking after her in amazement. 'Come in here,' said she, drawing the rector away from the hall and servants. 'You and Dolly are really most uncomfortable persons to deal with! Did you meet her? Did she pick you up on the road? Have you missed the train, or what has happened?'

'Everything that you are mentioning has happened,' said he.

'And so you have come back together? Well, I must say that

is the best thing you could have done ; only, now that you are here, I must entreat you, for my sake, to try to get on together.'

'I will. I promise you, I will.'

'That's sensible ! Most sensible ! There has not been much sense shown in the matter so far. I never knew such a foolish quarrel as yours and the Grahame's ! You have allowed a stupid, lying newspaper paragraph to part you all for life !'

'You are quite mistaken about that paragraph,' said he quietly. 'It was neither stupid nor untrue ; the only possible complaint that could be brought against it was, that its announcement was a little antedated.'

'You are engaged to Dolly !'

MARGARET HUNT.

### To Melancholy.

MY heart is as a Ruin where thou sittest,  
 Keen-eyed and sombre-hued, thou dismal owl,  
 While oft on overshadow'd wings thou flittest  
 About the twilight hours of my soul,  
 Making the gath'ring darkness (which thou fittest  
 With evil dreams and shrill weird cries) a night  
 Of horror. Grief's loud blasts go sweeping strong  
 Thro' Mem'ry-haunted galleries of the Mind,  
 Awaking echoes which had slumber'd long :  
 And yet I would not have thee hence ; the Wind,  
 Tho' loud, is lonely ; thro' its mournful Song  
 I need some Presence, tho' it be a blight  
 (Such as is thine), to tell me that among  
 The quick I wander still, as the immortals might.

E. SHARPE YOUNGS.

## One of His Inventions.

*(The right of translation is reserved.)*

BY CHARLES GIBBON.

### CHAPTER I.

IN THE GARRET.

DADDY MAYDEW never called it the garret: his imaginative way of looking at everything and his remembrance of old times in Leeds and Bradford impelled him to speak of his apartment as the factory.

‘Or rather,’ he would explain, ‘I ought to call it the manufactory; because you see everything in it is done by my own hand. I can’t pay for assistants, or some of these great ideas would have been perfected by this time, and would have realised millions, sir—millions!’

There was a pathetic mingling of half-conscious bombast, real faith in the losses he had sustained by his inability to obtain help, and regret at not having been able to complete with his own hand some of those great ideas to which he referred. They were scattered about the room, hanging upon the walls, arranged upon shelves in the shape of unfinished models of every description of machinery.

The apartment was of considerable size, for it took in nearly the whole length and breadth of the house beneath; and, although the roof sloped, there were two good square windows which gave him plenty of light. In front of one of them his bench or work-table was placed. In another part of the room were a turning lathe, and a bench constructed by himself with all necessary mechanical contrivances for assisting the workman in his labours of filing, cutting, punching and planing; and in the rack behind it was ranged somewhat carelessly an assortment of tools.

He was seated at the table, his genial face aglow with enthusiasm, in his hand a small model of a machine which was to work wonders for cloth manufacturers. He was describing its merits to a girl who stood behind him, one hand resting affectionately on his shoulder, the other holding a letter the contents of which she was scanning eagerly whilst she was supposed to be listening to the old man’s eloquence.

‘Now you understand the whole thing, Rosie-posie,’ he exclaimed proudly, the wrinkles on his face transformed by the spirit

of the satisfied inventor into ripples of laughter; 'and you can see what a grand thing it is.'

'Yes, Daddy, it is wonderful,' she replied—whilst mentally crying, 'What shall we do if papa and mamma really mean this?'

Daddy was as much delighted with her approval as if the patent had been granted, and demands for the machine pouring in upon him from all directions. He chuckled and admired the product of his genius.

'Nothing can beat it, although in its way that outside window cleaner is of quite as much importance to the public. How many lives that would save, and what incalculable comfort it would give the world, whilst the present insane construction of window frames is continued! There, with that little thing, you have only to stand comfortably inside your room, turn a little handle, and in five minutes you would have the advantage of all the daylight that is to be had. But that was a small thing, and nobody would take it up, because it was thought to be too much of a toy. (A toy, indeed, as if the invention of a good toy wasn't a blessing!)

'Yes, Daddy,' was the response; 'poor Linton, it is very hard upon you!' were the words in her mind.

'This machine, however, is a big thing' and appeals to large interests all over the world. It must be taken up—the manufacturers can't help themselves. I have only to satisfy myself about the best size this one wheel should be, and then, Rosie-posie, then!—there is a fortune for you and success at last for me.'

'You deserve it, Daddy,' she murmured warmly and half-recalling herself from the letter, but returning to it instantly with glowing cheeks. 'He is to be at the gate to-night in spite of everything!'

'Of course there will be a little delay at first, there always is in these things, my dear,' Daddy Maydew proceeded, 'but once it is launched it will go like wildfire. You and Linton are to have the big share of it, and won't you be happy! Aha! that is worth living for.'

He chuckled again joyfully, but there was a kind of spasmodic tightening of the hand that rested on his shoulder and a faint sound as of a subdued sob which caused him to look up. He did not look round at her, however, but at a little mirror opposite. There he saw Rosie with head bowed over a letter, and apparently crying.

There was a spasm of disappointment in the old man's heart as he comprehended the position. That passed like an electric flash. Quietly and carefully he placed the model on the table and turned to her.

'Rosie!'

She, too, was quick to understand the tone of mingled sympathy and regret. In an instant she was down before him, head bowed on his knees, sobbing confusedly.

‘Oh, grandpa, forgive me!’

The old man made no reply other than might be understood by the gentle patting of her head. He was disappointed. Here had he been revealing to her all the glories of his new work, feeling proud and sustained by what appeared to be her sympathy and appreciation, and, lo, her sympathy and appreciation had been all his own gift! She had been busy with her own affairs all the time. But wasn’t there a lesson in this? The fact was that inventors had to produce something which interested many individually. Well, either he had not done that or she was not one of the many who would be interested in his discovery. But he could not explain all that to her without adding to her pain.

‘Don’t bother about it, my Rosie-posie,’ he said at length, as he kissed the top of her head; ‘I was very selfish, and inflicted upon you a great many details which might have been left out. But you know when I am started on one of these things there is no stopping me. . . . Poor Rosie—I know it must have been something very troublesome that took your attention away from me, for you have always been such a good——’

‘Oh, Daddy, I have not been good!’ she interrupted with an exaggerated sense of her own wickedness.

‘You have been very good indeed, my child,’ he went on cheerily, ‘and you have listened to me and helped me day after day, when everybody else was laughing at me and calling me an old fool. . . . Ah, my Rosie! you do not know how much joy you have brought into my life—and, what is worse, I shall never be able to explain it to you. Now, now, come up and sit on my knee, and tell me all about the ugly giants who have got into the castle of my beauty. Then see if I can’t invent some engine to blow them all out again.’

He spoke quite cheerfully as he finished, and drew her up until she was sitting on his knee, her arms round his neck, and head resting on his shoulder.

‘It is a letter from Linton, grandpa.’

‘Well—well! What does he say? What is the result of hearing the lion in his den? Did the lion eat him up or did he ask him to dinner?’

Rosie’s first impulse was to hand him the letter to read; but although it contained nothing which he did not know already—except the information which she would have to give him in any case—it contained certain expressions of sacred import to herself



and to her lover, which might appear foolish to a third person, and so she was obliged to explain.

'You can easily guess what the result has been when Linton writes instead of coming to me. . . . Oh, grandpa—if you only had money!'

She sobbed as she gave vent to that ejaculation, and hid her face on his shoulder.

The pang which shot through his heart was indicated by the nervous twitching of lips and eyelids. But he only patted her head soothingly and murmured:

'Yes, Rosie, it is a pity. That is what everybody says—if I had money! But, you know, that is a cry which is never satisfied, my child. Even the millionaire utters it. Happiness is like water—it always finds its own level, and money is *not* the source of it. You know how poor I am and have been, and yet I have had much happiness. I do believe more happiness has been given to me who have failed in everything than to your father who has succeeded in everything.'

'I don't understand that. I only know it is the want of money which makes Linton and me so miserable just now. Oh, grandpa, if only one of your inventions had succeeded!'

She clung to him weeping, and the old man bowed his head in regretful shame. It was a harder hit than the girl could have imagined. He had been busy all his life and had failed in everything. This child's grief made him more painfully conscious of the fact than anything had ever done before.

Ay, if only one of the many great ideas he was so proud of had brought in its due harvest!

He leaned back in his chair, eyes closed that he might not see her tears, and perhaps that the mental vision might be clearer in its search for some way to help her.

'You are very fond of Linton?' he said meditatively.

Her answer was another little sob and a tightening of her arm round his neck.

'And you are quite, quite sure that nothing the world can ever do—nothing that *he* can ever do, will make you wish that you had never cared for him, or allow you to fancy that you might have been happier with somebody else—Mr. Jephson, for instance?'

'I hate Mr. Jephson!' was her passionate cry. 'I don't care for the world. I only care for Linton—and you.'

'And a little for your mother and father, I hope,' he said with gentle reproof, opening his eyes in some astonishment at her passion.

'Oh, yes, I did not mean to leave them out, but . . . I cannot help feeling vexed.'

'Because you cannot have all your own way. . . . There, I am not going to scold you. We are often vexed with the folk we like most and for the same reason.'

'But don't you think, Daddy, that I ought to have my own way in the choice of—of—Linton?'

'I am not sure about that.'

'You know he is good—and clever—and that he is sure to be successful some time.'

'I will admit him to be everything you like. But let us try to look at the matter like two wise people. We ought to be wise, Rosie, for you have youth, impulse, and hope on your side, and I have on mine, age, experience (a very expensive article seldom turned to the most advantage), and a desire to see you happy. Let us see what we can make of the position. We'll make a plan of it. Give me your pencil and a piece of paper.'

Having supplied these materials she drew a hassock close to his feet, and, kneeling on it, watched his face and the odd dots and strokes he made on the paper as he proceeded.

'Here is a young lady up in this corner who wants to marry that young man up in the other corner; but between them are these two bars, her father and mother. They are not unkind parents; but they have had experience of the world, have a keen appreciation of the comforts which money can buy, and, being satisfied that prosperity should be progressive, are desirous that their daughter should start where they are ending, that is to say, with her carriage. This young man up in the corner does not—'

'What a shaky-looking pothook you have made him, grandpa!' she interrupted.

'That is to show the possibilities for the development of character, my child,' was the impressive response, and he continued to study the position. 'This young man does not possess a carriage and is not likely to have one for a long time. So the parents say positively, "This will never do for our daughter." Now the question is how to reconcile these opposing elements so that they shall all have their own way and be happy.'

He looked at the figures with a puzzled expression, rubbing his nose with the pencil meanwhile.

'Well, how is it to be done?' inquired the girl eagerly.

'I don't see exactly how it is to be done,' he answered with evident distress.

She moved away from him disappointed and went to the window. Down below there was the green common of Peckham

Rye with its patch of water glistening in the sunlight. It was Saturday, and the common was made lively by swarms of cricketers and of youths shying sticks at cocoanuts. The curving range of the Sydenham hills, dotted with comfortable villas, formed the background, and the tower of the Crystal Palace gleamed like a beacon over all. But her eyes were blurred and saw nothing, although she and Daddy always called the attention of their friends to this pleasant prospect.

Gazing at his hieroglyphics with an expression of childish puzzlement he did not observe the change in the girl's manner, and went on innocently adding to her distress.

'You see, they are not unkind parents. Your mother has done a daughter's duty to me, and your father—well, he has not objected. Now we know what they have been and are, but we don't know what Linton may turn out to be.'

'I know what he is and always will be to me; and I know what he will always try to do—to make me as happy as he can.'

There was a little passion in her voice, and the old man looked up in dismay.

'Ah, my child, that is the idea so many people start with, only to find themselves cruelly disappointed by-and-by. It is so impossible to tell what change may come over man or woman as years and circumstances try them.'

'Nothing will alter him,' she said proudly.

'We don't know—something might alter *you*.'

'Why do you say that?'

'Because people do change,' was the only reply he could give, and it was accompanied by a sad smile.

She had seen that smile on two or three occasions before, and she had learned that the sadness was associated with some remembrance of old times. But he had never told her why the memory was sad—never hinted that once it had been very bitter, although now the alchemist, Time, had transmuted all the bitterness into simple regret that man or woman should be subjected to such disappointment as he had experienced.

There was not much in the story as he looked back upon it now, and he even wondered at the storm of passion which his disappointment had roused in him. He had married the wrong woman—that was all. She had squandered the fortune he had inherited from his father whilst she ridiculed the experiments in which he was continually engaged. Then had come the cruel awakening. He could have borne the knowledge that his means were wasted; but he could not bear the shock of the discovery that he was not and never had been loved.

'Come here, Rosie,' he said tenderly, thinking how much he would do to save her from such a disappointment as that. Then, when she was kneeling on the hassock at his feet again, he continued, as he passed his hand over her head: 'You are *quite* sure that there is no mistake between you and Linton?'

'I love him, grandpa,' was her frank and conclusive answer.

Then there was a little pause, and Daddy Maydew's eyes were gazing into space. By-and-by he said, dreamily:

'Very well, my child, very well; I will find a way to put this matter right.'

But how was it to be done? He could not see his way; and yet he was determined that the way should be found. Linton Foster was clever—there was no doubt about that; he had already won some distinction in his profession—an eminent authority had spoken of him as one of the most promising of the new generation of civil engineers. But this had not brought him fortune yet. However, the fortune would come in time.

Meanwhile what Daddy had to consider was that Rosie's whole heart was given to him, and Foster was worthy of the gift—he would prize and cherish it always. With him she would have the chance which comes to so few women, and of which so few women are worthy—the chance of being appreciated as a wife even more than as a sweetheart. With Harry Jephson she would become only a person whose chief duty it was to look after his house, and to dress in such manner as would best advertise the wares of Nettleton and Jephson's 'Universal Emporium.'

Come what might, Rosie should not be doomed to such a life as that.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE FAMILY BURDEN.

MR. NETTLETON was astounded—Mrs. Nettleton was indignant when Daddy Maydew once more appealed to them on behalf of the young people.

'I have forbidden Mr. Foster to cross my doorstep again,' said the gentleman, sharply; 'and when I say the word I mean it. Now, let us have done with this rubbish once and for all. I give my daughter credit for having sense enough to appreciate the difference between buttered toast and dry crusts. I request that you will not meddle with my domestic affairs, Mr. Maydew, or mention this particular subject again under any pretence.'

Mr. Nettleton was a little man, dark and thin. He had a

hungry look which nothing could satisfy, and a wiry frame which nothing could tire. He had begun life as a message boy, and was proud of it; he was now the head of the great firm of Nettleton and Jephson, the proprietors of the 'Universal Emporium'—a stupendous establishment, which had grown out of a nutshell of drapery to be really what its title implied. To a man who had created a business of this magnitude, and who had about two hundred 'persons' of both sexes under his control, it was monstrous to be told by an old dotard, who had never done anything useful in the world, that he was not the best judge of what would be most conducive to his daughter's future happiness.

He had suffered his wife's father to live in the house and to potter away with his toys; he would have been content to allow him to go on in the same manner for ever; but he could not allow him to disturb the peace of the household by raising his voice in its affairs. This was too much for Mr. Nettleton, and was, in short, an outrage upon his patience as well as a proof of the old man's rank ingratitude.

Mrs. Nettleton was entirely in sympathy with her husband, and was even more annoyed than he was with her father, who had never before in her recollection breathed a word in opposition to the will of anybody. It was beyond her comprehension how he could even think of appealing against a decision arrived at by her husband and herself.

She was a somewhat stout lady, who ought to have been ruddy and good-natured; but she never had any colour in her cheeks, unless an occasional tinge of yellow might be referred to in speaking of a lady's complexion. It was chiefly noticeable when she was very much out of humour, and at this moment the tinge was unpleasantly conspicuous.

'It is perfectly ridiculous,' she said, impatiently; 'and, all things considered, father, I think Paul ought to be the last man you should choose to worry with your absurd fancies. We can't believe—and I don't see how you can suppose—that you can have our daughter's welfare more at heart than we have.'

'Certainly not, my dear, certainly not,' replied the old man, meekly, and with a deprecatory movement of his hands.

'Very well, then, it ought to be enough for you that we have considered the matter and decided what we ought to do. Nothing you can say will make us change our minds except in regard to yourself. Can't you see how disagreeable you force me to be—what is the use of doing that?'

'I want to save you and your husband from making a great mistake as well as from doing a cruel thing,' was the quiet answer.

Daddy Maydew had been all these years treated by Mr. and Mrs. Nettleton as a harmless simpleton, incapable of forming an opinion about anything. When they said 'This is to be so,' or 'That is to be so,' he had been silent. Bitterly conscious that he was tolerated as a harmless idiot, he had never before attempted to argue with them about anything. He had smiled to himself at his own position sometimes, and looked forward with hopefulness to the day when some of his inventions should prove to them that he was not the fool they took him for.

He did not blame his daughter very much: he remembered how early she had been taught, by example if not by direct instruction, to laugh at his theories and profitless visions, and he was sorry. But he did not complain: he submitted to their wishes, and was content in being allowed to produce his unfinished models of new machinery without interference. He was grateful to Jane and to her husband, and shut his eyes to their disrespect. He did save them from one stupid act; but he had contrived to do it in such a way that they still took credit to themselves for having discovered the mistake in time without anybody's aid. Mrs. Nettleton had resolved to have her child named after the Queen—'Victoria Regina.' Daddy managed to show them that 'Regina' was not exactly a name by slyly reading to them a full explanation of what the initials V.R. really meant. Thereupon the mother—moved by the regret and even vexation she had long experienced on account of being endowed with the commonplace name of Jane—resolving that her daughter should still have a cognomen of which she might be proud hereafter, said, 'We shall call her Victoria Rosalind; and then, you see, she can sign herself V.R. all the same as if we could have used Regina!' Of that brilliant idea she was proud; but the Victoria had dropped out of use, and simple Rosie took the place of Rosalind.

With this exception Daddy had never dared to pretend to know better than his daughter and son-in-law in any circumstance of their lives. Yet, here he was now, not only assuming to know better, but insisting upon it with a quiet firmness which was irritating to people who had been accustomed to humble submission from him.

'Save me from making a mistake—you!' exclaimed Mr. Nettleton, letting his paper fall slowly down in front of him in his utter amazement at this audacity.

'Save me from doing a cruel thing!' chimed in the wife, aghast at her father's sudden temerity.

Daddy was evidently impressed by the indignation he had evoked, but he held firmly to his purpose.

'I really don't want to vex you, Paul—upon my word, Jane, I should be glad not to have this to do, but it is my duty.'

Mrs. Nettleton was unable to speak; her husband, however, was a man of business whose time was valuable, and he was not disposed to waste it in useless discussion with a foolish old man.

'You have done your duty, Mr. Nettleton,' he said severely, 'and a little more than your duty, in my humble opinion. But having done it, let us have an end of it.'

'Yes, yes, Paul, when I have done it—but it is not done yet. I know that I am a burden on the family, and some people would think that I had no business to open my mouth. But I don't think they would be right. Your partner Jephson is a good fellow, no doubt; and he has brought a heap of money into your business—but that can't make him the man who is to make Rosie happy. Can't you see that?'

'No, I cannot.'

'Then I am sorry for you,' observed Daddy, with a gravity which imparted unusual dignity to his manner. 'You have nothing to say against Linton except that he has no money. But, sir, he has brains, and he is heir to a great fortune.'

'What nonsense you are talking, father,' said Mrs. Nettleton. 'I wish you wouldn't make such an exhibition of yourself. Where is his fortune to come from, I should like to know?'

'From me,' replied her father calmly, and drawing himself up proudly.

'What rubbish!' muttered Mr. Nettleton, as he raised his paper again and applied himself to its contents, abandoning all hope of reasoning with the man.

'I shall leave all my work to Rosie on condition that she marries Linton. If she does not become his wife, then everything will go to him without her.'

'All right. Give him everything you possess and welcome.'

Mr. Nettleton sat down smiling at his father-in-law's odd humour, regarding it as the result of an excess of delusion about the value of his inventions.

'You will not be warned in time,' said Daddy in a melancholy tone; adding with a sigh, 'Ah, well, I am sorry that it should pass out of the family, but I have done my best to prevent it.'

And then he went away muttering something to himself.

'Jane,' said Mr. Nettleton, addressing his wife with sudden gravity, 'I hope there is nothing seriously wrong with your father. You know people who are queer in the head like him may be harmless enough for years and all of a sudden burst out into raving madness, murdering everybody they can lay hands on.'

‘Gracious goodness, Paul, what do you mean by saying such dreadful things?’ almost screamed the affrighted Mrs. Nettleton.

‘I don’t want to scare you unnecessarily, my dear, but we mustn’t shut our eyes to facts. I have just been reading a case in the paper here about a man who has killed his whole family, and then tried to cut his own throat.’

‘Dreadful!’

‘It’s horrible; and nobody had any warning of it except that he had been gloomy and out of sorts owing to some losses in business. Now, you know, your father may feel his disappointments about those confounded things upstairs more than we guess; and he has such a crazy fancy for that fellow Foster that our rejection of him might turn his brain altogether. I did not like his looks just now as he was going out of the room.’

‘I don’t think we need be afraid of any violence from father,’ was Mrs. Nettleton’s comment; but it was evident that her husband’s suggestion had alarmed her, and that she spoke under the influence of hope rather than that of conviction. However, she had considerable confidence in herself and her power over the mild old gentleman upstairs, so she added: ‘But I shall look after him.’

‘You had better keep a pretty close watch on him, and I will get Dr. Harvey to see him in the course of the day. At the same time you had better keep a sharp look-out on Rosie’s correspondence. It’s no use telling Foster not to come to the house if they can carry on their sentimental nonsense through the post. That would not be fair to Jephson.’

‘I’ll make her promise to-day that she is to have no communication with him whatever.’

‘It’s your duty to see that she doesn’t, whether she promises or not. There’s to be no underhand letter-writing or message-carrying in my house. I forbid it, and I expect you to see that my orders are obeyed.’

‘You needn’t get into a temper over it, Paul. I won’t allow her to write, and who is there to carry messages for her?’

‘Who?—you can guess well enough, and you must take care it doesn’t happen, that’s all. There’s one thing more I must say, Jane. I haven’t complained much about keeping your father, although you have so many other relations—’

‘They have all as much as they can do to keep themselves,’ interrupted Mrs. Nettleton, her complexion becoming again very yellow.

‘That may be, but they ought to have done something, and all I’ve got to say is that they’ll have to do it if he doesn’t obey the regulations I make in my own house.’



This ungracious speech was instantly resented, although Mrs. Nettleton had said something to much the same effect herself.

‘There is one thing I have to say, Paul—you are not to forget that it was my father’s money which gave you the chance of starting in business, and he has never interfered with you before.’

‘I have paid him fifty times over all I got from him,’ he replied calmly, but with an expression which the employés of the ‘Universal Emporium’ knew well and did not like; ‘but I am not complaining even now, and it would certainly be very stupid of us to have any words on the subject.’

‘Why do you begin it then?’

‘I really didn’t mean to begin it, and so let us drop it. What I want you want, and you know that you are as angry as I am at his meddling. The girl would never have been such a fool as to say “No” to our wishes if it hadn’t been for the nonsense he has put into her head. Our business is to get it out again as quickly as we can.’

‘That is exactly what I think.’

So the scene ended, and Mr. Nettleton proceeded to the ‘Universal Emporium’ with an unruffled countenance, satisfied that he would hear no more of Daddy Maydew’s sentimental nonsense. But Mrs. Nettleton was not so happy in her mind, as her servants speedily discovered. She could not overcome in a moment the chagrin of being again reminded that her father was a burden on the family. And then, if he should become violently insane, what was to be the consequence?—what dreadful things might happen? The chagrin and the fright combined to give her the appearance of one threatened by an attack of jaundice.

### CHAPTER III.

#### A POOR RELATION.

HE had promised to make it all right for Rosie and her lover, and it seemed that he had only made things, if possible, worse than before. He knew perfectly well that Mr. and Mrs. Nettleton would resent his interference with an acrimony which would probably induce them to be more relentless than they might have been if he had held his tongue.

So thought poor Daddy Maydew, as he marched up and down his garret, with hands clasped nervously behind him under his coat. That villain who had indicated his character and work by a wicked pun was right after all—Daddy *Maydo* was his proper designation.

Was he to be obliged to own to himself, then, after all those years, that he was an arrant fool? He looked round upon the many works of his brain and hands. Was it possible that he who had moulded all these useful ideas into practical form should be unable to convince two people (whose good-nature was for the moment confused by their ambition) that real love was not dependent on money, and that happiness could not be purchased by all the gold in the world?

He believed that he was right; but then he believed that his machines were right, whilst other people would not believe it. What wonder, then, that his daughter and son-in-law should prefer to be guided by the principles of ordinary life, and refuse to trust their daughter's comfort to the bubbles of hope and expectation? They were acting wisely and kindly according to their lights, and although they were quite able to give their daughter such a dowry as would secure her from any danger of poverty, they were reasonable enough in desiring that she should have additional security in the assured position of her future husband.

Looking round at all the evidences of his failures, it did seem not only absurd but criminal to attempt to force his opinions on those who had succeeded. But—and it was a big *but* this time—the matter at stake was one of happiness, not money, and he had found infinite happiness even in his failures!

And that was how it would be with Rosie and Linton Foster—they would be happy even if they did not become millionaires.

There was no use arguing about it; he intended that the young people should have their way, and the only question was how to bring it about. What a helpless, useless creature he must be if he could do nothing for them! He might appeal to Jephson to give up thinking of Rosie; but Jephson was a young man of thirty-five, who had a strong conviction that no man should marry before that age, and not even then unless his position was secured. Any assistant of the 'Universal Emporium' who sought an increase of salary on account of the multiplication of domestic responsibilities was certain of a month's notice on the spot. So it was no use appealing to Mr. Jephson.

Whilst these cogitations were distracting him, the door opened softly, and a tall, thin, sharp-featured lady entered. Her veil, hastily tossed back from her face, had assumed an erect and defiant shape on the top of her bonnet; there was anxiety in the grey eyes, but there was greed in them too, which instantly checked the sympathy a first glance at her excited. She was little over forty, but looked much older.

The old man halted, looked at her in a dreamy, bewildered way, and then exclaimed in a tone of distress :

‘ Barry is out of work again, and you have come for money ? ’

‘ It is true, uncle,’ replied Mrs. Barry, trying to modulate a shrill voice into soft tones ; ‘ Barry was obliged to resign his appointment, because the principal of his department was a vulgar fellow, who did not know how to treat him as a gentleman should be treated. What could poor Horace do but instantly send in his resignation to the Directors of the Company ? ’

‘ Oh, dear ! oh, dear ! ’ groaned Daddy, with increasing bewilderment and distress ; ‘ it seems to me that the first duty of a gentleman is to support his wife and family. What has he to do with people’s manners ? If he does his work he earns his money, and he can afford to pity the man who does not treat him like a gentleman. He would be more like one, and maybe make others feel that he was one, by doing what was offered him than by sending his wife about begging for him.’

There was neither irritation nor reproach in Daddy’s voice—only sheer despair on account of his niece. She, however, took out her handkerchief, and apparently stifling sobs wiped her eyes, while she said as plaintively as her voice would allow :

‘ You are very hard upon us—very hard. We do not want to trouble you, or anybody, I am sure ; but we have been very unfortunate, and you are our only friend. I know that we have had to appeal to you too often, but Horace will repay everything as soon as he gets a suitable appointment.’

‘ Why, he has had situation after situation, and he has never kept one more than six months ! ’

‘ You know that he was educated and brought up as a gentleman, and you must make allowances—he cannot submit to the indignities which common people pass unnoticed, because they are too ignorant to perceive them.’

‘ I don’t understand it—I can’t understand it : people who do their work need not bother themselves about indignities. But, how much is it you want this time ? ’

‘ Only five pounds,’ replied Mrs. Barry greedily ; ‘ only five pounds to make up the rent. We must pay it to-morrow, or they will turn us out of the house, and that would be death to me, and the children.’

‘ Five pounds !—*only* five pounds ! ’ cried Daddy hopelessly, as he lifted his hands. ‘ I haven’t got it.’

‘ Then we are ruined—absolutely ruined. Oh, my poor children, is there nobody to help us ! ’

She bowed her head, and all the sobs she had thus far suppressed were concentrated in one long wailing sigh.

'Have you spoken to Jane?' inquired the distracted inventor nervously.

'It is quite useless,' was the bitter reply; 'my cousin is like her husband, and can find no excuse for misfortune when it comes asking for help in money. If we had only been Hottentots, or wild beasts, of some kind—and I wish we had been, with all my heart—they would have given us plenty, and thought themselves benefactors of the world, when they saw their names in the newspaper amongst the generous donors. But, as we are only poor relations, they will do nothing for us.'

'I really—really think you ought to speak to her again, Agnes—she is not unkindhearted.'

'I cannot. But never mind, dear uncle; I know you would gladly help us if you could. As it is not in your power to do so, we must submit to our hard fate and go to the work—— Oh, I cannot name the dreadful place!'

'No, no, it is not so bad as that. I can manage to give you a sovereign, I dare say, and with it you will be able to hold out until Barry finds some friend to put him on his feet again. I did badly want the money to buy materials to complete this new machine, but you shall have it—you shall have it.'

He went hastily to a cupboard in the corner, but he had mislaid the key, and, after fumbling about in all his pockets, went to the bench in search of it. The key was not of much consequence, for he had little to lock up that was of value to anyone, except himself. Even if there had been a treasure to hide, the secret drawer which he had constructed within the cupboard would have baffled anyone who attempted to open it without the knowledge requisite, or a pickaxe. Only Daddy himself and Rosie knew the secret of that drawer, and it was great fun to them having this little bit of mystery between them.

'That's where I keep all that is most precious to me, next to Rosie,' he used to say, as he amused himself by allowing some curious person to try his or her best to discover the trick of the lock.

The words had taken a firm hold of Mrs. Barry's mind from the first, and year by year her imagination had exaggerated their importance as her needs increased, until at last she became convinced that there was untold wealth concealed in that drawer. Her uncle was a miser, and there lay his hoard.

He was keeping it all for his favourite, and doled out a pittance to her only by the repetition of such appeals as the present one. The farce had been enacted many times and always with the same conclusion: he went to the secret place, producing a sove-

reign, or two sovereigns; and she had taken the gift with lip gratitude, and inward indignation at his cruelty and selfishness to those who stood in need for the sake of one who was already amply dowered. She had questioned Rosie about the contents of the secret drawer with elaborate cunning. The reply was that it contained nothing more than some designs and the little money Daddy was able to put by at times in order to purchase materials for his work. Mrs. Barry did not believe a word of it. Rosie was a deceitful minx, and conspiring with her uncle to hide the truth that he had plenty of money. Rosie, questioned again at a different time, still gave the same answer, and this satisfied the impecunious niece that her suspicions were correct. The suspicion had developed into such perfect conviction that the farce which had hitherto ended so quietly was to have an important variation this time.

He found the key, opened the cupboard and then the drawer. One of the most important peculiarities of the secret fastenings was that he could undo them in the presence of anyone without the onlooker being able to discover how he did it. Then, with a wistful look in his eyes, he took out a sovereign. Much as he pitied his niece, he felt bitterly disappointed that his charity would delay the completion of his machine for months.

'Here it is, Agnes, it is all I have got; and you don't know what a loss it is to me. . . . But never mind,' he added with an attempt to be cheerful; 'better times will come—only they might have come sooner if I had had that sovereign.'

Mrs. Barry did not, as was usual, hold out her hand eagerly for the gift. She stared at him with a curious expression in which dismay, anger, and spleen were combined.

'That is no use,' she said huskily.

'Bless my soul,' exclaimed Daddy, looking at her, 'what is the matter with you?'

'Haven't I told you?' she said, swaying her shoulders a little as if his dulness were unendurable; 'ruin is the matter with me—starvation for me and my children. . . . I will own, uncle, that I have sometimes come to you for money when, maybe, it would have been better for us if we could not have counted upon you. I don't mean to blame Barry, mind,' she added hurriedly. 'He is doing his best, poor fellow; but he never was fitted or intended for business, and he can't help things going wrong.'

'I didn't mean to blame him or you,' said Daddy consolingly. 'Misfortunes happen to everybody, and I only wish that I could help you completely out of them; but this is all I can do.'

'I repeat, uncle, that it is no use. We must have five pounds

to-day, and I know quite well that you can give it to me if you like—I know that you could give me five hundred if you pleased.’

‘Me give you five hundred!’ said Daddy, his arms dropping by his side, his eyes opening and staring at her in amazement.

‘Yes, or five thousand!’ the woman went on passionately, whilst the eyes of her uncle started in more and more astonishment as she proceeded. ‘You can’t deceive me any longer. I know that whilst you have been making believe that you have never got anything for your work, you have been all these years getting something from dozens of people for your improvements in machinery. Oh, you needn’t try to hide it any longer! I have been reading about it; I have been reading about the fortunes Nasmyth has got and Bessemer has got; and there is one of your machines going at Bradford; and you are hoarding up all this fortune for Rosie, whilst we are starving.’

‘One of my machines going at Bradford!’ said Daddy, rubbing his nose with the sovereign and trying to make out whether or not this was a dream.

‘You know that well enough. I dare say you have made your will, and that you have left us something in it—but what is that to us? Give it to us now, and you will have some good of our gratitude—you can’t get much good of it when you are dead. . . . I am only asking this very little from you to-day.’

She *was* in earnest. There could be no mistaking that look, that tone; and even if a mistake might have been made about them, it would have been impossible to misunderstand the sincerity of her spiteful rage. She was envious of Rosie; she really believed that he had a secret hoard of treasure—she really believed that his inventions were bringing him in money! He felt as grateful to her as if she had given him the fortune she imagined he possessed. The bewilderment with which he had listened to her at first gave place to a glow of intense gratification. Rosie often made him happy because of her thorough conviction that his work ought to produce millions; but here was a woman who believed that they had done so, and he was grateful.

But it was of Rosie he had been thinking before Mrs. Barry’s appearance, and of how he was to help her to happiness. Mrs. Barry had unconsciously enabled him to see a possible way of achieving that end. He had always liked her and pitied her, finding much excuse for her selfishness and bad management of her household in her devotion to her husband and children; but he liked her more than ever at this moment.

‘Bless my soul!’ he gasped, with a degree of nervous hesitation which she misunderstood for distinct symptoms of annoyance

at having been detected in his deceit. 'How could you have discovered all that? I didn't think there was a living creature who believed in my work except Rosie and myself.'

'Ah, but you see you were mistaken, uncle,' replied Mrs. Barry eagerly. 'You see I believed in it and I know what it is worth.'

'And you really believe that I am making a fortune!'

'Now do stop all this pretending with me, please. I will keep your secret if you want it kept—but don't try to keep up the pretence with me any longer. I am sure it is not very much I am asking from you just now.'

There was a curious quiver about his lips which might have developed into a smile, but he checked it and said, still somewhat dreamily :

'You want five pounds?'

'That is all at present.'

'Very well,' he said with sudden energy, as he pocketed the sovereign, and Mrs. Barry felt her heart sink at the thought that he was about to deny her even that small sum. She was regretting that she had not taken it when first offered, but was relieved by his next words; 'very well, you shall have ten pounds this afternoon provided you ask me no questions. But you must come back this afternoon—say at four or five o'clock. I don't keep much money about me and must go into town to get it.'

'I shall wait for you, and I shall do everything in my power to show my gratitude for the relief you have given us. You will forgive me, uncle, for being so persistent, but I knew that you could help us, and I can quite understand your desire to make us do all that we could for ourselves in the first place. I shall wait for you. Jane will not refuse to allow me to stay in the house although she would refuse to give us the money.'

'Don't forget how much she has given you already,' he said hastily; 'there, we will say no more about that. Go down to her at once, and wait till I come back. There is no saying what extraordinary things may come out of these poor things yet,' he added, glancing round the room at his models.

'There is a great deal more come out of them already than people fancy,' she said, smiling as she quitted the room.

## CHAPTER IV.

## AT WORK.

IN dealing with her numerous poor relations, Mrs. Nettleton was careful to receive them in the stateliest room of the house—that is the drawing-room—and with the extremity of polite formality. She found that this course as a rule was highly successful in modifying the claims made upon her, and sometimes had even shut the mouths of the applicants altogether.

So she received Mrs. Barry in the drawing-room, and they were still standing, after having shaken hands stiffly, when Mrs. Nettleton saw her father rush past the windows as if hurrying to catch a train. She observed with displeasure that his collar was not properly put on, that the ends of his necktie were flying about his ears, and that his coat was buttoned in a most careless fashion. She had long ago given up all hope of persuading him to pay attention to his dress in the house, but she still felt annoyance when she saw him in the street so negligently attired as he was at present.

‘Dear me, where can he be going to like that?’ she could not help exclaiming.

‘Your father, you mean,’ said Mrs. Barry complacently. ‘I believe he is going into town, and he bade me wait till he came back. Of course I am very glad to do so, as it gives me the chance of having a nice long chat with you, Jane—we haven’t had one for ages.’

Mrs. Barry’s explanation and manner relieved Mrs. Nettleton whilst they excited her curiosity. She was relieved to find that it was only a chat her cousin wanted, and at the same time she was curious to discover what her visit had to do with Daddy’s sudden flight to town.

‘I haven’t got time for gossip to-day and must ask you to excuse me. As my father has gone into town—I suppose to waste some more money—there is no saying when he may come back, for he has no notion of the value of time. When he gets into one of those machinery shops he loses all count of it.’

‘Pray do not let me interfere with anything you have to do, Jane, dear. I would not disturb you for the world. But my uncle said he would be back about four, and if you don’t very much mind I would rather wait, because it would be such a long walk for me to go home and return. You see even the expense of an omnibus is a consideration to me—although I do not expect it will be so long now.’



She added the latter words with a significant smile and nod which somehow annoyed her cousin.

‘I am sure I hope not, and I am glad to find that you have at last come to consider how you spend your money. I wish you could get my father to do the same.’

‘You ought not to be so severe upon him, Jane,’ counselled Mrs. Barry sweetly; ‘you don’t know what reason you may have to be sorry for it by-and-by. He hasn’t gone into town to spend money as you suppose, but to draw some.’

‘Draw money, from what?’ Mrs. Nettleton regarded her with lofty pity.

‘I am not at liberty to say anything more—indeed I have already said too much. But I could not help giving you the friendly hint that uncle is not the silly old man you all take him for, and that he has not been wasting his time and money as you all fancy.’

‘I am very glad to hear it, and shall be still more glad when I see some proof of it. I’ll send Rosie to you presently.’

Mrs. Nettleton felt that she had not conducted this interview with her customary dignity, and that, whatever the cause, a singular change had taken place in her cousin’s manner. Hitherto she had always been, if not exactly humble, most respectful; now she had suddenly become as arrogant, although in a quiet way, as if she had inherited a fortune. Yet there was no palpable reason for the change, unless it had something to do with those foolish references to Uncle Maydew and some mystery about his work.

As if there could be any mystery indeed about anything Mrs. Nettleton’s father had done and she not know it! All the same, the change in Mrs. Barry was remarkable. She had never before come to the house without asking for some more substantial favour than leave to remain for a few hours. This time she had sought nothing more, except the ‘nice long chat,’ which she had suggested as if they were in positions of perfect equality.

Daddy Maydew went down to the Peckham Rye station, and took a first-class return ticket to Victoria. The booking clerk, who knew him well by sight, and that he always travelled third, repeated inquiringly, ‘First, sir?’

‘Yes, first-class return, if you please,’ said Daddy, laying down his ninepence with a grand air of indifference to expense.

Nobody would have had the least suspicion that whilst going through this performance he was perfectly aware of the neighbourhood of a smartly-dressed man who evidently desired to avoid

him. But as soon as he had got his ticket, Daddy wheeled round and addressed the skulker.

‘How do you do, Mr. Jephson?—hope you are quite well—have important business at Westminster. I suppose you are going to Ludgate. In a hurry—good-bye!’

Mr. Jephson was taken aback at being discovered, but muttered something which was doubtless intended to be courteous in response to this hasty salutation. He was relieved when he saw Daddy prancing up the stairs as if there were not a minute to spare. Looking at Mr. Jephson, of Nettleton and Jephson, proprietors of the ‘Universal Emporium,’ and observing his fine raiment, and plain but sensible face, you would have called him a gentleman. If you had known that he skulked behind Daddy because he believed the old man was going third class rather than because of the feeling of dislike he had for him—what would you have called Mr. Jephson then?

‘What’s in the wind now?’ he was mentally asking himself as he secured his own ticket. ‘There is something up with the old boy when he has important business at Westminster and travels first. I don’t believe he ever did it before. Something is up.’

Henry Jephson was a man of average height, with thin red hair, a thick pale moustache and short crisp whiskers. He had invested considerable capital (inherited from his father) in the ‘Universal Emporium,’ and was now the possessor of a handsome fortune, whilst still under forty. He was a smart man in business, although when away from it he was weak enough to desire to make people believe that he had no connection with trade. At Brighton he delighted to pose as a gentleman of no occupation.

He desired to marry his partner’s daughter for two good reasons: first, because she was an only child, and consequently the whole business of the ‘Emporium’ would thus fall into his hands; second, because he liked her as well as a man who always thought of himself first was capable of liking a woman, and he fancied they would ‘pull together’ as satisfactorily as most couples. Mr. and Mrs. Nettleton were entirely of his way of thinking; but the young lady was not, and she was supported in rebellion by her grandfather. That was why he did not care for Daddy; but he would have ridiculed his opposition if it had not been that Linton Foster was an important item, which had to be taken into the account.

However, Foster was a poor beggar who had nothing to depend on but his brains, and long before they could win for him a decent income Jephson had no doubt the girl would be his wife, and grateful to him for having saved her from the pitfall which senti-

ment and inexperience had dug for her. It never occurred to him that sentiment, directed by sincerity, is frequently wiser than experience directed by selfishness. It never occurred to him that Daddy Maydew had been longer in the world than he had been, and had passed through some very cruel experiences in this very matter of matrimony. To Henry Jephson as to so many others Maydew was simply an old fool, but in his case he had unfortunately the power to be a somewhat troublesome one.

However, Jephson had the happy faculty of dismissing disagreeable subjects from his mind when the moment in which they absolutely demanded attention had passed. So he went on his way with delightful self-satisfaction.

Daddy was self-satisfied, too, on this day. The forest of chimney-tops through which the train was carrying him seemed to suggest agreeable thoughts, and even the huge black gasometers near Vauxhall told him some exquisite joke.

He got out of the train at Victoria with a nimbleness which surprised himself. He glanced cunningly up and down the platform, but saw no one who knew him. If there had been any person in the crowd who might have carried the story to his son-in-law, he would have taken a cab. As it was he walked at his best speed to Westminster Chambers. Passing through one of the large doorways, he hurried up the stairs and entered an office which was half hidden at the end of a long passage.

'Is Mr. Foster in?' he said to a youth, who was diligently reading a novel which was concealed from chance comers by the lid of a huge ledger.

'Yes, sir—what name?' was the prompt answer, as the ledger closed on the novel.

Mr. Foster appeared from the inner room as soon as he heard the name of the visitor, and welcomed him heartily. He was a strong, frank-faced, good-natured-looking fellow, but there was some anxiety in his expression as he inquired immediately after closing the door of his private room:

'Have you brought me any message, Mr. Maydew? You know the turn things have taken now?'

'Yes, yes, I know all about that. I have no message, but it will be all right in the end—don't lose heart—get me ten pounds—make out an assignment of my window-cleaner and anything else you like—and it will be all right in the end.'

Daddy spoke disjointedly in his haste, and Linton Foster was a good deal perplexed as well as amused by his excitement. He was also disappointed that there was no message from Rosie.

'Is she well?—how is she bearing it?'

'She is bearing it well enough—I'll see that she keeps up her heart, and if you want to make her happy get me that ten pounds—in sovereigns—all new sovereigns.'

'Of course I shall get what you want, but I wish you would explain——'

'Now, now, you are not to ask for any explanation,' interrupted Daddy. 'You must trust everything to me and do exactly as I bid you. You believe that you can make her happy, don't you?'

'I do,' was the quiet response.

'So do I, and so does she, but her father and mother do not, and you must take them into account. They can't understand your business or mine. All they know is that you are a civil engineer, that you sit in this office which would be like a bandbox in the "Emporium," and you haven't even got any stock in the bandbox beyond some sheets of paper with a lot of lines on them. They can't see how a fortune is to come out of that. Don't be angry with them—they can't help it. It's a pity and you must forgive them. But what is the use of our talking about this? I tell you it will be all right if you do what I ask.'

Foster filled up a cheque and sent his lad to the bank with instructions to ask for new sovereigns, in obedience to Daddy's whimsical request. He comprehended that the old man had some plan in his head by which he hoped to reconcile Rosie's parents to her union with him; and although he would have felt more satisfied if he had been allowed to take an intelligent part in carrying it into effect, he was content to be led blindfold so long as he could believe that he was being guided towards her.

'I shall do whatever you tell me, Mr. Maydew,' he said, 'but I hope you will not keep up this mystery with me longer than is positively necessary. For the present, I shall only ask, when may I hope to see her again?'

'I don't know, lad,' said Daddy, laying a hand paternally on his shoulder; 'but if you keep quiet, and if I am not blundering more than I have ever done in all my blundering life, you will have an invitation to Windsor House from Mrs. Nettleton before long.'

Foster smiled and shook his head doubtfully.

'You might persuade her to do that, but Nettleton will never agree. He not only told me plainly that I am not to enter his house again, but he has written to say that he trusts to my honour as a gentleman not to force my attentions upon his daughter in any clandestine way. These are his words—the letter arrived only a few minutes before you came in.'

'Never mind that; you may be sure that he will agree to whatever Jane says, and she will say in a very short time that she

will be pleased to see you. Keep up your heart, Linton : you and Rosie will be happy yet. Look after the assignment of the patent window-cleaner, and you may as well throw in the automaton shoe-brush.'

'Oh, that reminds me ! I showed the window-cleaner to young Seton, the architect, and he thinks there is something in it.'

'I *know* there is a great deal in it,' said Daddy, proudly, 'and a great deal more in another machine, which you shall see when it is quite finished. Only Rosie has seen it as yet, and she is——' he stopped. He had been about to say that she had been much impressed by it ; but remembering what he had seen in the mirror, and how she had been occupied during his explanation, a droll smile came over his face as he said instead, 'Well, she didn't quite understand it at the time. However, you must put down the assignments as made in consideration of the sum of fifty thousand pounds.'

'Fifty thousand ! My dear Mr. Maydew, how am I to do that ?'

'By writing the words in the bond, of course. Don't say any more—remember our bargain : you are to do what I tell you and ask no questions.'

Foster laughed good-humouredly.

'I see you have some practical joke in your head, although what it can be is a puzzle at present. I'll get the agreement written out at once, but I suppose it is not necessary to go to the expense of stamping it at present.'

'Maybe it is a joke and maybe it is not ; and whether it is worth stamping or not we shall soon discover. Good-bye ; have it ready to-morrow, and you may expect me here about this hour.'

'Will you bring me any message from her ?' asked the lover, forgetting all his curiosity about Daddy's joke in his eagerness to have some hope of a sign from his mistress.

'Can't say, can't say. I suppose there will be no harm in telling that she is well, or ill and had to take physic. We'll see.'

That was the only assurance Daddy would give. The ten bright sovereigns were made into a roll with tissue paper, and he bustled out of the office.

He next called at the International Patent Office, and made some inquiries which involved correspondence. Then he visited in succession the representatives of our colonial governments, and from each he was courteously promised answers to his various inquiries within a few days. Lastly he called on Messrs. Merri-field, Jawler & Co., a firm of highly-respectable old-fashioned city solicitors in Cannon Street, who had for many years transacted business for him. After a brief interview with the senior partner,

Mr. Merrifield, he took train from Ludgate Hill, and was again in the garret of Windsor House shortly after four o'clock.

Then he had a mysterious interview with Mrs. Barry. In her presence he took from the secret drawer a roll of gold, and slowly counted into her hand the ten fascinating bits of metal, so slowly that it seemed as if he felt a pang at the parting with each piece. When he had done he sighed.

'Now, Agnes, that's a great deal of money for you to have all at once,' he said, holding her hard as if half inclined to take it back; 'and I hope you will use it properly, and that it may enable you and Barry to pull through your present straits. Mind, this is so much taken off whatever it may be in my power to leave you and your children. But this can't be repeated. I am *not* made of money, although your good opinion of my work makes you think so. And there is one thing which I must impress upon you very strongly—*very* strongly indeed.'

'Say what it is, uncle; you know that I have always been obedient to you, no matter what others might say or do,' answered the niece with real warmth and sincerity, for the advantage was entirely on her side.

'That is very good of you. I don't ask anything you cannot agree to, for all that I want is that you withhold your tongue about where you got this money. You understand?'

'Oh, quite well! Nobody shall have the least hint from me—I'm sure they shan't.' To herself she added, 'I am not such a fool as to tell others where the golden nest lies.'

'Thank you, my dear. You know that I don't like to be worried about money, and if—well, if anybody should discover that I was able to give you so much, there would be no more peace for me, and peace is essential to my work. I must have quiet—you can understand?'

'Oh, yes, uncle, perfectly! and I shall do nothing to cause you annoyance.'

'It will be all the better for yourself, remember that.'

She did remember that; but Mrs. Barry's greed had to contend with her vanity, and the latter generally got the best of the struggle. So in the present instance, whilst expressing her gratitude with a profusion of words and a few real tears of joy, resolving in her own mind that for her own sake she would keep the miser's secret, her humour gradually changed as she began to descend the staircase. Her nose went up into the air, her shoulders were thrown back, and she could not help prancing into the parlour with an air of smirking condescension, holding the now inflated purse ostentatiously in her hand. She felt that she had already

touched the position of independence, in which she could afford to be offensive to her cousin, who was the wife of a mere tradesman. *Her* husband was a gentleman with ancestors, and he was still entitled to rank higher than the shopkeeper, notwithstanding the unfortunate circumstances which required him occasionally to obtain temporary advances from that low personage.

She could not help dropping more mysterious hints about the boundless fortune they had in prospect. She could not help begging with sweet humility that her dear Jane would allow one of the servants to call a cab, as she felt so overcome with fatigue and also distressed in mind about poor dear Rosie, who looked really ill and appeared to be suffering from some great mental depression. She could not help giving her dear cousin some patronising counsel about the management of the dear child.

When she went away Mrs. Nettleton stared after the cab in a state of frowning bewilderment. Surely the malady which Nettleton had hinted as affecting her father could not be infectious! Agnes certainly had behaved in a most extraordinary manner during this visit.

She had not asked for anything! She had displayed all the airs of a fine lady, and patronised her with a degree of assumption which Mrs. Nettleton had not observed since the first few months after her marriage with 'Gentleman' Barry. Yet the man was out of work! (That was the coarse way Mrs. Nettleton put it: she did not stoop to the refinement of saying that he was 'disengaged,' or had no 'appointment' at present.) And what was more—Nettleton had emphatically declared that he would not recommend him to another situation. Yet for the first time in the course of years Mrs. Barry had gone away without asking for any assistance from her rich relative: had gone away in as much state as if she had been the possessor of thousands a year.

Mrs. Nettleton was very irritable under the influence of her cousin's conduct, and was on the point of going to ask Rosie if she understood it, when Dr. Harvey was announced.

'I am very much disturbed about my father, doctor,' she said. 'I suppose Nettleton has told you what we feel. I do hope it is not so bad as that.'

'We will soon see, Mrs. Nettleton,' returned Dr. Harvey, a tall, kindly-faced old gentleman, wearing a broad white choker. 'You had better let me go up to him at once and I dare say we shall soon find out what is the matter.'

The doctor expected to see Daddy Maydew busy as usual with his models, but found him at the unusual occupation of letter-writing, and so busy that he did not at first lift his head.

'One moment, doctor, excuse me,' he said, and having finished a sentence rose to shake hands with him.

'Busy as usual,' observed the doctor cheerily, and noticing that Daddy's hair was much tossed, that his eyes were unusually bright, and his cheeks somewhat flushed.

'Yes, very busy, and this time to some purpose.' Daddy rubbed his hands together with delight. 'I shall have a pleasant bit of news for you in a few days, but for the present I don't care to speak about it. I have had so many disappointments in my life that I don't want to say a word about this affair until all the deeds are signed, sealed, and delivered.'

'That is a sensible way of acting, Mr. Maydew, but you must be careful to avoid excitement.'

'How can you help being excited when one of the things you have set your heart upon is, after so many failures, suddenly accomplished? But I don't want to speak rashly. You know how Nettleton has laughed at me—I don't blame him, you know: I would have done the same myself if our positions had been changed. This time I have kept my secret. Even Rosie does not know it. The news will be the pleasanter to them all when it comes as an accomplished fact. Don't you think so?'

'Not a doubt of it.'

'Well, these papers and the payment of a certain sum to account satisfy me that there is no mistake this time. You must have had a patient, doctor—say an only child—whose life hung upon a single thread. You saw how frail the thread was, you saw the anxious eyes of mother and father; you would have liked to say "Hope," and you dared not lest the thread should snap and their agony be all the greater because of the brief joy you had given them. So instead of "Hope" you say "Wait." Well, I too say "Wait": a few days will decide the case and you shall congratulate us.'

'I shall be glad to do that.'

'Oh, you shall have the opportunity, never fear! . . . Bless my soul, how I am chattering! But you know, doctor, suppose, in the case of your patient, the thread instead of snapping gains strength, and the little one rises into new life, and you see the bright happy faces glowing with gratitude, you know that you must have felt a bit excited as I do now. You must have been inclined to chatter, too, in your pleasure if you happened in the first glow of it to have the ear of an old friend who would not misunderstand your self-congratulations.'

'I am perfectly sure of it,' rejoined the doctor, laughing, and much pleased to think that he could report satisfactorily to Mrs. Nettleton as to the mental condition of her father.



‘You won’t mention my chatter downstairs, doctor—the thread *may* snap, you know, and if it does I should like to bear all the sorrow myself.’

The doctor had no intention of betraying the confidence thus reposed in him, but it was impossible to avoid saying to Mr. and Mrs. Nettleton that they were quite mistaken about Mr. Maydew, and that he believed they would have a pleasant surprise in a few days. The son-in-law was disappointed by the doctor’s good report; the daughter forgot that she had been in any way anxious about her father’s mental condition in her increasing curiosity as to the meaning of the effect he had produced on two such different people as Dr. Harvey and Mrs. Barry. The former had evidently learned something which he believed would be agreeable to them all when they came to know it; the latter had decidedly found out something much to her advantage.

Then came to Mrs. Nettleton the remembrance of the purse, and with it the recollection of the suggestion which had been often made by various poor relatives that her father was a miser, hoarding up treasure untold in his secret drawer whilst pretending to be possessed of nothing beyond the fifty pounds a year which had been saved from the wreck of his fortune. Might there not be some truth in the suggestion? He was a man who never locked up anything—money, papers, models, everything he possessed were open to the inspection of anyone who chose to inspect his rooms. Yet a few years ago he had constructed this secret drawer, and only Rosie knew what it contained. To crown all, there was the warning he had given them that they were making a mistake, and that whatever he had to leave would only go to his grandchild in the event of her marrying Linton Foster, in whose ability he had such infatuated confidence.

The reel which these thoughts and speculations danced in her brain kept Mrs. Nettleton awake during the greater part of the night, to the serious inconvenience of her husband, who only growled out ‘Rubbish!’ whenever she endeavoured to discuss the subject with him.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE WORK GOES ON.

BUT even Mr. Nettleton opened his eyes a little when the morning postman knocked twice, indicating that the despatches he carried could not be got into the letter-box, and when, the door being opened, he delivered a number of letters and packets all bearing official stamps on the covers, which were addressed to

'S. Maydew, Esq.' Nettleton pretended to be looking through the bundle for his own letters, but he was really doing in a furtive way what his wife was doing openly—reading the names of the firms and government offices from which the despatches came.

'Here is one from Merrifield and Jawler,' she exclaimed; 'father never had anything to do with them except on most important business. . . . Paul, there is something in all this.'

'Rubbish!' growled Mr. Nettleton again; but he was inwardly not quite so certain of that as he affected to be.

As post after post throughout the day brought letters and packets for her father, and as he was continually sending out letters to the post office, Mrs. Nettleton felt that she certainly would have an attack of jaundice if she did not speedily get to the bottom of this mystery. Her excitement reached a climax when a telegram came, and the boy said he was to wait an answer as reply was paid.

She went up to the garret herself with the telegram.

'What is all this about, father—what has happened?' she inquired, making no attempt to conceal her determination to know what it was about.

'Nothing has happened yet, Jane,' he answered in his mild way, 'but I hope something agreeable is going to happen soon, and I hope you will be pleased with it.'

'What is it?'

'Ah, you must try to guess for the present, as I am not going to tell you until it is all quite settled. You and Paul have so often laughed at me for my foolish dreams, that—in short, I am not going to tell you.'

'Oh, you have got some of your inventions taken up at last, she said, smiling with more pleasantness in the expression than she had shown for a long time.

'I hope so,' he answered humbly.

'But why shouldn't you tell *me* all about it? Nobody can have so much interest in it as I.'

'I am not sure of that,' he said deliberately. 'You must not forget that I was in earnest in what I said to you downstairs the other day. . . . But there, don't let us talk about it at present. You will know all about it in a very little while, and I must answer this telegram.'

'I will take it downstairs for you.'

'Thank you.'

He read the telegram; his face brightened, and she could not refrain from inquiring again, 'What is it about?'

'You would not be interested unless I could give you the explanation, which you cannot have yet.'

She bit her lip. He laid the paper on the table whilst he proceeded to write the answer. Without altering her position Mrs. Nettleton could read the message. It was from Linton Foster.

*'All your terms are agreed to. Shall I close the bargain?'*

As he wrote it she could read the answer:

*'Certainly; consider the matter settled. The only difficulty that can arise will be as to time.'*

'I hope the arrangement is a satisfactory one,' she said, still trying to find out the nature of it.

'I have no doubt you will agree with me that it is—by-and-by.'

'I never saw you in such a state before, father.'

'No, my dear, because I never had such an important negotiation on hand before.'

He smiled pleasantly and she smiled too, as she glanced round the room. She had no doubt of being able to solve the mystery by an inspection of his papers after he had gone to bed. Daddy had been always careless about his correspondence, laying letters down anywhere which anybody who chose might read. Books may lie about long enough without anyone troubling to read them; but drop a letter on the floor and nineteen out of every twenty passers-by will at least scan its contents before thinking of restoring it to the owner.

Mrs. Nettleton had scolded her father for this negligence. 'But, my dear, what does it matter?' he would say. 'There is nothing in them that can interest anyone except the writers and myself.' To that the lady replied: 'They contain statements about—about relatives whose position I do not like every servant who comes into the house to be made acquainted with.' 'Ah, then, I see you have been reading the letters yourself, Jane,' was his comment, with that merry twinkle in his eyes which so often puzzled her and Nettleton. He was always seeing jokes where they could see none.

He did not mend his ways in this respect; and on the present occasion Mrs. Nettleton was glad of it. Before the night was over she would learn everything. Several nights, however, passed before she discovered anything except envelopes bearing imposing official stamps, some of them being 'On Her Majesty's Service.' He was evidently on his guard, and that fact rendered her more certain than anything else could have done that the 'something' he was concealing was of importance.

But one night Daddy went to bed earlier than usual, Rosie had gone to her room, and Mr. Nettleton was out at a vestry meeting, declaiming bombastic platitudes which he believed to be

common sense, only adorned with the eloquence natural to a man who was thoroughly in earnest about the parish roads and pavements. Then Mrs. Nettleton went up to the workshop and lit the gas, determined to have a thorough search.

This time there were heaps of letters from poor relations who had not been heard of for years, all praying for help, and hinting that when he could do so much for Mrs. Barry they had no doubt he would spare a little for them from his boundless stores. For this they would bless him and be for ever grateful. Mrs. Nettleton did not like to be reminded of this army of poor relations who had been, thanks to her management, kept at bay so long; but they enabled her to understand the position. Her father had somehow come into possession of money, and that fool Barry had been the first to profit by it. She must have been talking in her vanity and so set the whole pack upon him.

Where had he got it and how? She found the answer on a neatly-folded large sheet of foolscap paper, which purported to be the draft of an agreement between Samuel Maydew, Esq., on the one part and Linton Foster on the other, setting forth that in consideration of the sum of fifty thousand pounds the aforesaid Samuel Maydew assigned all his rights and interests in certain patents to the said Linton Foster and George Seton.

Mrs. Nettleton trembled with astonishment and excitement; the sheet of paper shook as if it were being held up in a gale.

What could this mean? She looked round the room and to her dizzy eyes the models appeared to be dancing a wild reel of triumphant joy. They were laughing at her as they whirled about; and as the gas wavered in the draught caused by the open door, the long shadows on the slanting ceiling bowed to her with mocking condescension. . . . But she must have read the words wrongly. No, there they were in square lawyer-like penmanship—fifty thousand pounds sterling!

This, then, was why he had been so bold as to tell her and her husband that they were making a mistake in not taking his advice to let their daughter have her own way in the choice of a husband. This was what lay behind his warning that they would regret the step they had taken in forbidding Foster to come to the house—he, Foster, was to be the sole heir if Rosie did not marry him. This explained the sudden accumulation of correspondence—letters, papers, telegrams—and the rush of poor relations, clamouring for assistance. This, too, explained the strange conduct of Mrs. Barry. She—bitter thought to the wealthy tradesman's wife—had been admitted to share this great secret of Daddy's wealth before his own daughter.

It was positively wicked of him never to have spoken a word about it to those who had the best right to know. It might be even that this was not all—Mrs. Barry had said many times that her uncle was a miser, and Mrs. Nettleton was now able to recall numerous confirmatory circumstances; as, for instance, the way in which at every meal he would gather up the bits of bread left on the table, and carry them upstairs to rub out the blunders in his useless drawings, in order to spare a penny for india-rubber (they really went to feed his family, as he called the fat sparrows which swarmed on the window-ledge every morning). Then how careful he was about his money, never taking 'bus or tram if he could walk the distance; how he would never give a penny to a beggar, although he would buy him bread; and how he was always lamenting his poverty, saying if he had money to buy this or that, if he could only find enough to complete some piece of work to his liking, when she knew quite well that he had enough for his purpose. All these were unmistakable signs of the miser's spirit, and the proof that he was under its influence was in her hand.

Mingled with these reproachful thoughts was the chagrin that she had been so long hoodwinked by her father, and that she had not been the first to understand his ways. She had not yet reached the point where she could regret having been so unsympathetic in her treatment of him.

What was she to do now? Consult Nettleton, of course, and see what he had to say on this important subject.

Nettleton returned from the vestry meeting glowing with triumph because he had carried his resolution to have a new street thoroughly paved and the road made passable at once. (He had half a dozen or so small houses in that street, for which he could not obtain tenants in consequence of the state of the thoroughfare.) But even this triumph was forgotten in his amazement at the contents of the document which his wife—after due consideration—gave him to peruse.

'Some more rubbish, I suppose,' was his first remark. But when he saw the document and grasped its nature he was silent for a little, examining suspiciously every word and line. Then: 'That Seton must be the son of the alderman, and if he is in it the thing is safe. . . . I suppose they are going to form a company. Why didn't he tell me about it? I could have managed so that we could have kept the lion's share in the family. As it is, you see, he gives up everything to them.'

'But you know, Paul, we would not believe in anything he was doing. You said it was all rubbish, and I thought you knew best about these things.'

‘Did he give you this to show me?’

‘No.’ And she thereupon truthfully explained how the document had come into her possession.

‘Put it back in its place and don’t let him know that we have seen it. . . . Is Rosie in the secret?’

‘I asked her, and all she seems to have been told is that there is something very particular going to happen soon.’

‘Very well, we shall not speak about it until he tells us himself—but it’s a pity I couldn’t have had the management of it. I must have a look at the things he has upstairs. It is possible after all that we have been mistaken about him, as he said the other day. . . . He ought not to have been hiding things from us in this way, though. I am sure he has had everything he could want from me.’

‘What will Jephson say to this?’ exclaimed Mrs. Nettleton, thinking of the glory which would fall upon the family.

‘Jephson won’t be interested when he knows that he won’t get a penny out of it,’ rejoined the husband thoughtfully. ‘I wonder how it could have been managed so quietly,’ he added after a pause. ‘I dare say he will be at us again about the marriage Has Rosie said anything?’

‘No, poor child! I think she is becoming really ill.’ Mrs. Nettleton was beginning to think that after all it might not be such a bad thing to let the girl have her way.

‘Rubbish! Harvey tells me there is nothing the matter with her or your father. She is only sulking, and I wish she would stop it, for it is confoundedly uncomfortable. A downright illness of some sort would not be half so bad.’

*(To be concluded.)*

## Michael Kelly.

THEATRICAL memoirs, contrary to what might be imagined from the popular nature of the subject, are not, generally speaking, very attractive reading. There is a certain sameness about most of them which after a while becomes positively wearisome, and this is almost inevitably the case where the adventures of the hero or heroine of the book entail upon the author or compiler the necessity of referring to events already related in preceding contemporary biographies, the time-honoured maxim '*bis repetita placent*' not being to the taste of every reader. Besides, we are apt to expect more than we can reasonably hope to find; we forget that '*la plus belle fille du monde ne peut donner que ce qu'elle a,*' and are disposed to blame the writer for the dry details which, in the absence of any more interesting material, he is compelled to give us. It is, therefore, refreshing occasionally to meet with a work where the professional monotony of an actor's life is relieved by such extraneous matter as bright social sketches and amusing anecdotes; and nowhere is a pleasanter combination of dramatic and desultory gossip extant than in the autobiographical reminiscences of jovial Mick Kelly, 'composer of wines and importer of music,' as Sheridan wickedly styled him. The book has, moreover, lost nothing by being confided to the editorial supervision of Theodore Hook, who, by the way, if we may judge from specimens of Kelly's orthography which have passed through our hands, must have found the task of deciphering the MS. a somewhat puzzling one; and who, we suspect, infused no small portion of his own drollery into the original production. These two volumes, now by no means easy to procure, form the ground-work of the following notice, and are supplemented by whatever available information from other sources we have been able to obtain.

Michael Kelly was born in Dublin in 1764; his father, Thomas Kelly, was then master of the ceremonies at the Castle, and a wine merchant in Mary Street; his mother, whose maiden name was McCabe, belonged to a respectable family in the county of Westmeath. Both were fond of music, a taste apparently inherited by their fourteen children, the eldest of whom, Michael, was 'when three years old, daily placed with the wine on the table to howl Hawthorn's song in "Love in a Village," "There was a jolly Miller,"' for the entertainment of the friends whom the hospitable wine merchant delighted to have around him. Four years later

he was taught the rudiments of the art by Morland, a clever musician but incorrigible drunkard, who 'slept all day in a cellar,' and was wont to declare, as Kelly says, 'somewhat nationally,' that 'his morning began at eleven o'clock at night,' but under whose tuition his pupil made rapid progress, and was soon enabled to perform with precision the then fashionable sonatas of Schobert. He also took singing lessons from Peretti, the original Artaxerxes at Covent Garden, and afterwards from Rauzzini, who strongly advised his parents to send him to Naples for the purpose of completing his musical education. This was eventually decided upon; but, previous to his departure, the arrival in Dublin of an Italian company gave the young vocalist an opportunity of essaying his powers during the illness of the leading tenor as the Count in Piccini's opera 'La buona Figliola,' his success in which induced him to accept an engagement for four nights offered him by Ryder, then manager of the Crow Street theatre, commencing with three performances of 'Cymon' (Mrs. Arne, Michael Arne's second wife, playing Silvia to 'Master' Kelly's Cymon), and one—for his benefit—of 'Lionel and Clarissa.' In the latter piece—selected many years after for his *début* on the London stage—he sang the title-part, and Mrs. Arne, Clarissa; the character of Jessamy being sustained by the subsequently celebrated dramatist O'Keefe.

On the 1st of May, 1779, he sailed in a Swedish merchant vessel, bearing with him letters of introduction to Sir William Hamilton, then *chargé d'affaires* at Naples, and to Father Dolphin, a Dominican friar, whom Kelly's parents (devout Catholics, like himself) had selected as his 'guardian, protector, and friend;' and reached his destination at the end of the same month. His first visit, after the release of the passengers from quarantine, was to his appointed mentor, prior of the convent of St. Dominic, who recommended him to be guided by Sir William Hamilton's advice as to the course of study most advantageous for him to pursue; and, after regaling him with 'chocolate and snow water,' enjoined him to lose no time in presenting his credentials to the diplomatist, by whom, as well as by his wife—the first Lady Hamilton, then considered the finest pianist in Italy—he was received with great cordiality, and invited to join them at dinner. Among the guests were the Duke of Bedford, then one of the directors of the opera at the Pantheon in London, and the celebrated Millico, the latter of whom not only delighted the company with his own singing, but also listened attentively to the young Irishman's performance of 'Water parted from the sea' from 'Artaxerxes,' and 'said many kind things' to him. On the following day Kelly saw Sir William by appointment; and it was decided that, after allowing himself a



fortnight's holiday for the purpose of visiting the city and its neighbourhood, he should commence his studies under the direction of Finaroli, head of one of the rival Conservatoires, and an eminent composer of church music.

In the interim he accompanied an English friend to Rome, and relates several droll anecdotes picked up during his stay there, two of which, showing the free and easy criticism indulged in by the Roman play-goers of that day, are worth quoting. 'Cimarosa was once so unfortunate as to make use of a movement in a comic opera which reminded those present of one composed by him during the preceding carnival. An Abbé started up and said: "Bravo, Cimarosa! you are welcome from Naples; by your music of to-night it is clear that you have neither left your trunk nor your old scores behind you. You are an excellent cook in hashing up old dishes!"' The second relates to the mischances of a tenor at the Teatro Argentina. 'Before he had got through five bars of his first song the critics began to hiss and hoot (very deservedly, for he was execrable); on which he came forward, and addressed the audience very mildly. "You fancy you are mortifying me by hooting me: on the contrary, I applaud your judgment, for I solemnly declare to you that I never appeared on *any* stage without receiving the same treatment, and *sometimes worse*!"'

Soon after Kelly's return to Naples he made the acquaintance of Aprile, then allowed to be one of the greatest singers of the day, who offered to take him with him to Palermo, and instruct him gratuitously, remarking that he had already taste and expression, and would be capable in a short time of earning his bread anywhere. By the advice of his patrons this generous proposal was gladly accepted, and it was arranged that he should remain in Sicily as Aprile's guest and pupil until the expiration of the latter's engagement at the Palermo theatre. On his arrival he set to work in earnest, and, his voice having gradually fallen into a tenor, was soon able to execute to his master's satisfaction several airs composed for the leading singers of the time; thanks to which proficiency he was permitted, on the occasion of the annual festival of Santa Rosalia, to make his first public appearance in Italy by singing a motet in the principal church of the city. This, he observes, was no slight favour, he being the only native of Great Britain who had ever sung at that festival; the circumstance, indeed, was deemed so extraordinary that his name and country were inscribed at Aprile's suggestion in the archives of the church.

At length, after a stay of several months, passed partly in study, partly in enjoying the hospitalities of many Sicilian families to whom he had been specially recommended by his

Neapolitan friends, he left Palermo with regret; and, his passage to Leghorn having been secured by his kind master, embarked on board a vessel bound for that port. On landing, he perceived a young lady and gentleman standing on the Mole, 'making observations. As the former looked at me, she laughed; and, as I approached, I heard her say to her companion, in English: "Look at that girl dressed in boy's clothes!" To her astonishment I answered in the same language: "You are mistaken, miss; I am a very proper *he* animal, and quite at your service!"' Thus began an acquaintance destined to ripen into a life-long intimacy, for the young couple were no other than Stephen Storace and his sister Nancy, the latter of whom, although only fifteen, was at that time the prima donna of the comic opera at Leghorn. With their valuable aid Kelly determined on improving his finances by organising a concert, the proceeds of which amounted to eighty sequins; and soon after, on the departure of Storace for London, set out for Florence by way of Pisa, where he met with the hero of the following anecdote. This was a certain Soderini, who had been for some years a violinist at the London opera house, 'one of the ugliest men,' says Kelly, 'I ever saw. When Favar was ballet-master, Soderini went on the stage after a rehearsal, and introduced himself to him, saying that he was the dearest friend he had on earth, and that he could never sufficiently thank him for the happiness he had conferred on him by coming to London. Favar, who had never seen or heard of Soderini, was astounded; at last, he asked him to what he might attribute these compliments? "To your unparalleled ugliness, my dear sir," replied Soderini; "for before *your* arrival I was considered the ugliest man in Great Britain."'

Kelly's first visit at Florence was to Campigli, the manager of the Pergola, to whom Aprile had written in his favour, and who offered him an engagement for three months at the Teatro Nuovo, which he readily accepted. He then paid his respects to Lord Cowper, to whom he had a letter of recommendation, and dined with him in company with old Sir Horace Mann (Walpole's correspondent) and Merry of Della Cruscan celebrity; in the evening he enjoyed the treat of hearing Tartini's 'Devil Sonata' admirably played by Nardini. The character chosen for his *début* was the title-part in 'il Francese in Italia;' and, in order to do it justice, he took lessons in acting from Laschi, a comedian of note then retired from the stage. The prima donna was a certain Signora Lortinella, called Ortabella from her extreme beauty; and the principal buffo Morigi, who had sung in London, and one of whose peculiarities consisted, whenever the audience failed to applaud,

in clapping his hands as he made his exit, and saying : ' Well, if they want taste, I do not.' Our author's reception was very flattering, and his success complete ; the audience comprised all the fashionable Florentine world, including the Pretender, Charles Edward, then old and infirm, who, according to his usual custom, fell fast asleep a few minutes after he had entered his box.

While at Florence, Kelly received a letter from Linley, Sheridan's father-in-law, and joint proprietor with him of Drury Lane, offering him a five years' engagement as first tenor ; his acceptance of the proposal was, however, hindered by the arrival of a second epistle from his correspondent, declining at present to enter into any contract with him, owing to his being under age ; his father having threatened to use legal means to prevent it. His disappointment, occurring at the moment when his engagement at Florence was drawing to an end, annoyed him greatly ; and, on hearing from Campigli that the post of first tenor of comic opera at Venice was still vacant, he eagerly closed with the offer, and started for that city by way of Bologna, where, happening to fall in with his future colleague the prima donna and her husband, they continued their journey together. His evil star, however, was still in the ascendant ; on arriving at Venice they found that the manager, not being in possession of sufficient funds for the necessary deposit required by the Senate, had disappeared no one knew whither, leaving his actors to shift for themselves. ' Here,' says Kelly, ' was a pretty *coup* for a man with five crowns in his pocket !' His fair companion, ' with caro sposo, mamma, little black boy, lap-dog, &c.,' returned next day philosophically to Bologna ; whereas our hero, not having the means of doing the like, had no alternative but to stay where he was.

In this dilemma he bethought himself of a letter of introduction given him by his landlord at Bologna to a certain Signor Andrioli, and the address upon it being a coffee-house on the Rialto, proceeded thither, and soon discovered the object of his search in an old gentleman of aristocratic appearance, wearing a large tie wig with an immensely long tail ; who, after perusing the letter, requested him to meet him at two o'clock at the same place, from whence they would adjourn to his house, ' where,' said he, ' you will perhaps do me the favour of partaking of a boiled capon and rice.' Kelly, whose five crowns had dwindled down to two, was enchanted at the idea of such a banquet ; and at the appointed hour found his new friend awaiting his arrival. On their way they came to a shop, in the window of which some ready-dressed ham was exposed for sale ; the old gentleman paused, and regarded it attentively. ' Do you know, Signor,' said he, ' I

was thinking that some of that ham would eat deliciously with our capon ; I am known in the neighbourhood, and it would not do for me to be seen buying ham ; but do you go in, and get two or three pounds of it, and I will walk on, and wait for you.' To refuse was impossible, and reluctantly changing one of his precious coins, Kelly presently came out of the shop, laden with three pounds of ham, and rejoined his companion, who walked on leisurely until they passed a wine cellar, where he made another pause. 'In that house,' he remarked, 'they sell the best Cyprus wine in Venice, and I should like you to taste it, but I dare not be seen purchasing wine by retail ; go in yourself and buy a couple of flasks ; nobody knows you, and it won't signify in the least.'

This second demand on his purse considerably startled the poor youth, but reflecting that 'a patron, cost what he might, was still a patron,' and as such to be humoured, he bravely sacrificed his remaining crown, and resumed his walk with his pocket full of ham, and a flask under each arm, until, at the extremity of a dirty lane, his 'patron' stopped before a dingy-looking house, and marshalled his guest up three pair of stairs into what he called his 'casino,' but which was in reality a garret. On a rickety table, covered by a soiled and tattered cloth, were two plates ; and presently a ragged nondescript, who officiated as footman and cook, brought in a large bowl of boiled rice.

'Where's the capon ?' said my patron.

'The capon !' echoed the servant.

'Has not the rascal sent it ?' cried the master.

'Rascal !' repeated the man, apparently terrified.

'I knew he wouldn't !' exclaimed Signor Andrioli. 'Well, never mind, put down the ham and the wine, and with those and the rice I dare say, young gentleman, you will be able to make it out. It is all your own fault that there is not more ; if I had fallen in with you earlier we should have had a better dinner.'

Perceiving, rather late in the day, that he had been duped, Kelly resolved at all events to have his share of the good things he had already paid for ; and attacked them with an appetite scarcely surpassed by that of his Barmecide entertainer. At the conclusion of the repast, the latter promised him a ticket for an amateur performance in Count Pepoli's private theatre on the following day, and this time was as good as his word—a most fortunate circumstance, as it turned out, for among the spectators was Signora Benini, a well-known actress and singer, who at once recognised our hero, and sent her husband to invite him to her box. The result of the interview was a proposal to him on her part to join an operatic company at Gratz, for which town she

herself was on the point of starting; his salary for the autumn and carnival was to be two hundred sequins, and the additional inducement of a seat in her own carriage was offered him. Such a piece of good luck was the more welcome as being wholly unexpected, and in due time the travellers reached their destination, and Kelly (or O'Kelly as he was generally styled) not only succeeded in becoming a favourite with the public, but, thanks to the special patronage of the Governor of Gratz, was admitted into the best society of the place. Towards the end of the carnival a severe cold so seriously affected his voice as to render a change of climate absolutely necessary; and, much to his regret, he was compelled to retrace his steps southwards, returning by choice to Venice, and bearing with him from his patron, the Governor, letters of introduction to several of the most influential personages, native and foreign, residing in that city.

We must pass briefly over the interval which elapsed between his arrival there and his subsequent engagement at Vienna; the genial air of Italy soon enabling him to resume his professional career, he sang successively at Brescia—from whence he was obliged to beat a hasty retreat in consequence of a quarrel with the manager, a certain Cavaliere Manuel, who had openly declared his intention of 'putting him out of the way'—at Verona, and at Venice, where he found his old acquaintance, Nancy Storace, drawing overflowing houses, and quite the rage. One morning he received a summons from the Austrian ambassador, who informed him that he had been charged to recruit a company of Italian singers for the Imperial Court, and offered to engage him for one year at a salary of four hundred gold ducats (200*l.*), with the supplementary advantages of lodging free of expense, fuel, and 'four large wax candles per diem.' Kelly at once signed the agreement, the more readily on hearing that Madame Storace and the two best comic singers in Europe, Benucci and Mandini, were also engaged; and soon after set out for Vienna, carrying with him, among many others, letters of introduction to Sir Robert Keith, the British minister, Marshals Lacy and Laudon, and the Prince de Ligne. No sooner had he arrived than he hastened, as in duty bound, to pay his respects to Salieri, chapel-master and sub-director of the opera; and then proceeded to deliver his letters, the one addressed to Marshal Lacy being immediately responded to by an invitation to dinner.

His sojourn in this charming city was always dwelt on by Kelly as foremost among the pleasant memories of his life, and indeed he had ample reason, both professionally and personally, to congratulate himself on the exceptional privileges accorded him.

Well received by the public, and on excellent terms with all his colleagues, he had, moreover, frequent opportunities of associating with a variety of celebrities of every class, such as so young an artist has seldom if ever enjoyed. The Emperor, Joseph II., was passionately fond of music, and a regular attendant not only at the performances, but also at the rehearsals, during which he was wont to converse familiarly with the leading members of the company. Kelly describes him as 'an enemy to pomp and parade, methodical in his habits, and accessible to the complaints of the meanest of his subjects.' He had a great aversion to sitting for his portrait, and on being solicited to do so by a celebrated painter, declined, saying: 'There can be no occasion for taking up your time and mine; if you are anxious to have a likeness of me, draw the portrait of an ill-looking man with a wide mouth and a large nose, and you will have a facsimile.' A very different personage was his prime minister, Prince Kaunitz, formerly the chief counsellor of Maria Theresa, and the originator of the marriage between Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette. Though very old, he was inordinately vain of his person, and extremely particular in having his hair dressed in the latest fashion; 'in order to accomplish this object, he had four valets with powder puffs, puffing away at him until his hair was powdered to his satisfaction, while he walked about his dressing-room in a mask.'

While at Vienna, Kelly assiduously frequented the German theatres, where Schroeder and Brockmann then reigned supreme; the former told him that on the occasion of his visit to England he never missed a performance of the 'School for Scandal'; and each time was more and more delighted with the wit of the piece and the excellence of the acting. Among their female contemporaries one alone, Madame Adamberger, pre-eminently shone; she is reported to have been Mrs. Jordan's very prototype 'in figure, voice, action, and genius'; so perfect indeed, according to Storace, was the resemblance, that it would have been almost impossible to distinguish one from the other. Nor was the Austrian capital at that period less remarkable for musical celebrities: Gluck and Mozart resided there, Paisiello paid it a flying visit, and Haydn lived within an easy distance of it at Eisenach. With all these Kelly was more or less intimate, but to none did he owe so much as to Mozart, who, on the production of the 'Nozze di Figaro,' not only assigned him the part of the stuttering judge, but allowed him, contrary to his own opinion, to stutter during the sestetto of the second act. The result proved that the singer was in the right, and at the conclusion of the opera the composer acknowledged that, far from spoiling the effect of the *morceau*, he had notably

increased it. Meanwhile, Stephen Storace had arrived at Vienna, bringing with him an engagement for his sister, signed by Gallini for the London opera house; and our hero, who desired nothing better than to try his fortune on the English stage, made up his mind to solicit leave of absence from the Emperor, who was then at Schönbrunn. Having obtained an audience, he found Joseph surrounded by half a dozen general officers, among whom was his own compatriot, General Kavanagh, who addressed a few words to him in Irish, to which, not understanding them, he made no answer. 'What, O'Kelly,' said the Emperor, 'don't you speak the language of your own country?' 'Please your Majesty,' replied Kelly, 'none but the lower orders of the people speak Irish.' Joseph burst into a loud laugh, and the unfortunate speaker, recollecting too late in whose presence he stood, was ready to 'bite his tongue off' for mortification. However, either the General did not or would not hear the unlucky phrase, and the desired leave was granted.

Early in February 1787, he, together with the Storaces, left Vienna; and, after a short halt at Munich, Strasburg, and Paris, where he visited the principal theatres, made acquaintance with the tragedian Larive, and unwillingly submitted to the usual ceremony, then inflicted on foreigners, of being presented with nosegays, and embraced by the 'dames de la halle,' arrived in London for the first time in his life on March 18. On the same evening he accompanied Storace to Drury Lane, where Grétry's 'Richard Cœur de Lion,' which he had already heard in Paris, was being performed; and reached the theatre in time to listen to the romance sung by the royal captive, with whose vocal powers he was greatly disappointed, and remarked to his companion that if his majesty was the best singer they had he was not afraid of entering the lists as his competitor. Storace laughed, and told him that the gentleman in question was no other than John Kemble, who had undertaken the part as there was no singer in the theatre capable of representing it. Our author adds that during one of the rehearsals of this identical air, the leader of the band called out to Kemble that he was 'murdering time'; to which 'glorious John' coolly replied, while inhaling a pinch of snuff: 'My dear sir, it is better for me to murder time at once, than to be continually beating him as you do!'

On the following day Kelly signed an engagement with Linley for the remainder of the season, and made his first appearance in England April 20, 1787, as Lionel in 'Lionel and Clarissa,' with a success beyond his warmest hopes. Shortly after he was introduced to the witty Father O'Leary, as great an amateur of whisky

punch as the narrator himself; and records one of his sayings while dining at his table with John Philpot Curran. They had been exchanging repartees 'fast and furious' during the entire meal, and at its close Curran, addressing O'Leary, said that he wished the latter were St. Peter. 'Why?' inquired the reverend. 'Because in that case,' said Curran, 'you would have the keys of Heaven, and could let me in.' 'By my honour and conscience, Counsellor,' replied O'Leary, 'it would be better for you that I had the keys of the other place, for then I could let you out.'

A still more agreeable addition to the circle of his acquaintance was the beautiful Mrs. Crouch, whose constant admirer he remained until her death in 1805, and in the ensuing year caused a monument to be erected to her memory in the church of St. Nicholas at Brighton. With his comrades he appears to have been as general a favourite as he was with the public; and Adolphus, in his excellent 'Life of Bannister,' bears personal testimony to his unaffected amiability and kindness of heart. As an artist he has been variously judged: Boaden tells us that his voice 'had amazing power and steadiness,' and that its compass was extraordinary; whereas, according to Leigh Hunt, it was 'poor and sharp.' In any case, however, it is certain that at the period of his engagement at Drury Lane, when good male singers were far from plentiful, he proved a decided acquisition; and as young Meadows in 'Love in a Village,' Carlos in the 'Duenna,' and Lord William in the 'Haunted Tower' he attained no little celebrity both as vocalist and actor. Indeed, so satisfied was he with his position, that he decided on abandoning his original intention of returning to Vienna, and remaining where he was; his recognised musical ability insuring him a handsome addition to his theatrical salary. Between the years 1797 and 1821 he composed for different theatres the music of no fewer than sixty-two pieces, many of which, such as 'Blue Beard,' 'Love Laughs at Locksmiths,' and the 'Hunter of the Alps,' were mainly indebted to him for their success; he was also manager, and subsequently stage-manager, of the Italian opera for nearly thirty years.

Whenever his engagements permitted he starred in the provinces, generally with Mrs. Crouch, and after her death with Mrs. Billington and Madame Catalani, his favourite resorts being York, where his old friend Tate Wilkinson was manager, and Dublin. He was in Paris when the unfortunate King and Queen were brought back from Varennes, and 'never,' he says, 'shall I forget the exultation of that caitiff Tom Paine; his Bardolph face blazed with delight, and Governor Wall (who was with him at a café) loudly vociferated curses on their heads.' In 1802 he



again visited the French capital, during the consulship of Buona-parte, and went with John Kemble to see Talma play Oreste; Charles Fox was in the theatre, and the audience, on ascertaining the fact, insisted on his coming forward, and cheered him most enthusiastically. In the preceding year he had started a new speculation by buying the lease of a house in Pall Mall, at the corner of Market Lane, the lower part of which he fitted up as a shop for the sale of his compositions. Kelly's Saloon, however, as it was called, proved a financial failure, and nine years later its owner, a victim to the speculations of his managing man of business, became bankrupt. He was very intimate with Sheridan, and relates, among many other anecdotes concerning him, one worth recording. The dramatist and his son Tom were supping at his house one evening, when the latter, addressing his father, observed that in his opinion many men who were called patriots in the House of Commons were great humbugs; adding that, if he got into Parliament, he would pledge himself to no party but write on his forehead 'To be let.' 'And under that, Tom,' said his father, 'write "Unfurnished."'

In 1811 he appeared for the last time on any stage at Dublin, on the very boards where he had made his first essay as a boy, and henceforth confined himself entirely to his managerial duties and musical composition. In his latter years he was a martyr to the gout, of which malady he remarks that, if it be true that it 'grants to its possessor a long lease of life, the lease is certainly held at a *rack-rent*.' In his case the effect was sudden; for, having been sent to Margate for the benefit of the sea air, he had scarcely arrived there when he was seized with a violent attack of his old enemy, and expired October 9, 1826, in his sixty-second year.

Three portraits to our knowledge exist of Kelly; one as a young man, charmingly engraved by Condé, and published in the 'Thespian Magazine;' another in the 'Monthly Mirror,' representing him in middle age; and a third prefixed to the first edition of his 'Reminiscences,' and generally allowed to be an excellent likeness.

CHARLES HERVEY.

## Heart and Science.

A STORY OF THE PRESENT TIME.

BY WILKIE COLLINS.

*(The right of translation is reserved.)*

### CHAPTER LX.

AFTER a brief interview with his step-son, Mr. Gallilee returned to his daughters in Scotland.

Touched by his fatherly interest in Carmina, Ovid engaged to keep him informed of her progress towards recovery. If the anticipation of saving her proved to be the sad delusion of love and hope, silence would signify what no words could say.

In ten days' time, there was a happy end to suspense. The slow process of recovery might extend perhaps to the end of the year. But, if no accident happened, Ovid had the best reasons for believing that Carmina's life was safe.

Freed from the terrible anxieties that had oppressed him, he was able to write again, a few days later, in a cheerful tone, and to occupy his pen at Mr. Gallilee's express request, with such an apparently trifling subject as the conduct of Mr. Null.

'Your old medical adviser was quite right in informing you that I had relieved him from any further attendance on Carmina. But his lively imagination (or perhaps I ought to say, his sense of his own consequence) has misled you when he also declares that I purposely insulted him. I took the greatest pains not to wound his self-esteem. He left me in anger, nevertheless.

'A day or two afterwards, I received a note from him; addressing me as "Sir," and asking ironically if I had any objection to his looking at the copies of my prescriptions in the chemist's book. Though he was old enough to be my father (he remarked) it seemed that experience counted for nothing; he had still something to learn from his junior, in the treatment of disease—and so on.

'At that miserable time of doubt and anxiety, I could only send a verbal reply, leaving him to do what he liked. Before I tell you of the use that he made of his liberty of action, I must confess something relating to the prescriptions themselves. Don't be afraid of long and learned words, and don't suppose that I am

occupying your attention in this way, without a serious reason for it which you will presently understand.

‘A note in the manuscript—to my study of which, I owe, under God, the preservation of Carmina’s life—warned me that chemists, in the writer’s country, had either refused to make up certain prescriptions given in the work, or had taken the liberty of altering the new quantities and combinations of some of the drugs prescribed. Precisely the same thing happened here, in the case of the first chemist to whom I sent. He refused to make up the medicine, unless I first provided him with a signed statement taking the whole responsibility on myself.

‘Having ascertained the exact nature of his objections, I dismissed him without his guarantee, and employed another chemist; taking care to write my more important prescriptions under reserve. That is to say, I followed the conventional rules, as to quantities and combinations, and made the necessary additions or changes from my own private store when the medicine was sent home. This proceeding—adopted purely to spare my time and my temper—has had a result which I never contemplated. It has stopped the interested visits, paid by that scoundrel Benjulia to the landlady of this house.

‘Poor foolish Mr. Null, finding nothing to astonish him in my course of medicine—as represented by the chemist’s book—appears, by his own confession, to have copied the prescriptions, with a malicious object in view. “I have sent them,” (he informs me, in a second letter) “to Doctor Benjulia; in order that he too may learn something in his profession from the master who has dispensed with our services.” This new effort of irony means (thanks to the deceitful evidence of the chemist’s book!) that I stand self-condemned of vanity in presuming to rely on my own resources.

‘But I am grateful to Mr. Null, notwithstanding: he has done me a service, in meaning to do me an injury. My imperfect prescriptions have quieted the mind of the man to whom he sent them. This wretch’s distrust has long since falsely suspected me of some professional rivalry pursued in secret; the feeling showed itself again, when I met with him by accident on the night of my return to London. Since Mr. Null has communicated with him, we have been spared the insult of his visits. The landlady (the only person who consented to see him) is no longer perplexed and offended by his questions—all relating to the course of treatment which I was pursuing upstairs.

‘You now understand why I have ventured to trouble you on a purely professional topic. To turn to matters of more interest

—our dear Carmina is well enough to remember you, and to send her love to you and the girls. But even this little effort is followed by fatigue.

‘I don’t mean only fatigue of body : that is now a question of time and care. I mean fatigue of mind—expressing itself by defect of memory.

‘On the morning when the first positive change for the better appeared, I was at her bedside when she woke. She looked at me in amazement. “Why didn’t you warn me of your sudden return?” she asked; “I have only written to you to-day—to your bankers at Quebec! What does it mean?” I did my best to soothe her, and succeeded. There is a complete lapse in her memory—I am only too sure of it! She has no recollection of anything that has happened, since she wrote a last letter to me, on the twenty-fourth of August—a letter which I ought to have received before I left Quebec. This forgetfulness of the dreadful trials through which my poor darling has passed, is, in itself, a circumstance which we must all rejoice over for her sake. But I am discouraged by it, at the same time; fearing it may indicate some more serious injury than I have yet discovered.

‘Miss Minerva—what should I do without the help and sympathy of that best of true women?—Miss Minerva has cautiously tested her memory in other directions, with encouraging results, so far. But I shall not feel easy until I have tried further experiments by means of some person who does not possess Miss Minerva’s powerful influence over her, and whose memory is naturally occupied with what we older people call trifles. When you all leave Scotland next month, bring Zo here with you. My dear little correspondent is just the sort of quaint child I want for the purpose. Kiss her for me till she is out of breath—and say that is what I mean to do when we meet.’

The return to London took place in the last week in October. Lord and Lady Northlake went to their town residence, taking Maria and Zo with them. There were associations connected with Fairfield Gardens, which made the prospect of living there—without even the society of his children—unendurable to Mr. Gallilee. Ovid’s house, still waiting the return of its master, was open to his step-father. The poor man was only too glad (in his own expressive language) ‘to keep the nest warm for his son.’

The latest inquiries, made at the asylum, were hopefully answered. Thus far, the measures taken to restore Mrs. Gallilee to herself had succeeded beyond expectation. But one unfavourable symptom remained. She was habitually silent. When she

did speak, her mind seemed to be occupied with scientific subjects: she never mentioned her husband, or any other member of the family. Time and attention would remove this drawback. In two months more perhaps, if all went well, she might return to her family and her friends, as sane a woman as ever.

Calling at Fairfield Gardens for any letters that might be waiting there, Mr. Gallilee received a circular in lithographed writing; accompanied by a roll of thick white paper. The signature revealed the familiar name of Mr. Le Frank.

The circular set forth that the writer had won renown and a moderate income, as pianist and teacher of music. 'A terrible accident, ladies and gentlemen, has injured my right hand, and has rendered amputation of two of my fingers necessary. Deprived for life of my professional resources, I have but one means of subsistence left—viz. ;—collecting subscriptions for a song of my own composition. N.B.—The mutilated musician leaves the question of terms in the hands of the art-loving public, and will do himself the honour of calling to-morrow.'

Good-natured Mr. Gallilee left a sovereign to be given to the victim of circumstances—and then set forth for Lord Northlake's house. He and Ovid had arranged that Zo was to be taken to see Carmina, that day. On his way through the streets, he was met by Mr. Mool. The lawyer looked at the song under his friend's arm. 'What's that you're taking such care of?' he asked. 'It looks like music. A new piece for the young ladies—eh?'

Mr. Gallilee entered into the necessary explanation. Mr. Mool struck his stick on the pavement, as the nearest available means of expressing indignation.

'Never let another farthing of your money get into that rascal's pocket! It's no merit of his that the poor old Italian nurse has not made her appearance in the police reports.' With this preface, Mr. Mool related the circumstances under which Mr. Le Frank had met with his accident. 'His first proceeding when they discharged him from the hospital,' continued the angry lawyer, 'was to summon Teresa before a magistrate. Fortunately she showed the summons to me. I appeared for her, provided with a plan of the rooms which spoke for itself; and I put two questions to the complainant. What business had he in another person's room? and why was his hand in that other person's cupboard? The reporter kindly left the case unrecorded; and when the fellow ended by threatening the poor woman outside the court, we bound him over to keep the peace. I have my eye on him—and I'll catch him yet, under the Vagrant Act!'

## CHAPTER LXI.

AIDED by time, care, and skill, Carmina had gained strength enough to pass some hours of the day in the sitting-room; reclining in an invalid-chair invented for her by Ovid. The welcome sight of Zo—brightened and developed by happy autumn days passed in Scotland—brought a deep flush to her face, and quickened the pulse which Ovid was touching, under pretence of holding her hand. These signs of excessive nervous sensibility warned him to limit the child's visit to a short space of time. Neither Miss Minerva nor Teresa were in the room: Carmina could have Zo all to herself.

'Now, my dear,' she said, in a kiss, 'tell me about Scotland.'

'Scotland,' Zo answered with dignity, 'belongs to uncle Northlake. He pays for everything; and I'm missus.'

'It's true,' said Mr. Gallilee, bursting with pride. 'My lord say it's no use having a will of your own where Zo is. When he introduces her to anybody on the estate, he says, "Here's the Missus."'

Mr. Gallilee's youngest daughter listened critically to the parental testimony. 'You see he knows,' she said to Ovid. 'There's nothing to laugh at.'

Carmina tried another question. 'Did you think of me, dear, when you were far away?'

'Think of you?' Zo repeated. 'You're to sleep in my bedroom when we go back to Scotland—and I'm to be out of bed, and one of 'em, when you eat your first Scotch dinner. Shall I tell you what you'll see on the table? You'll see a big brown steaming bag in a dish—and you'll see me slit it with a knife—and the bag's fat inside will tumble out, all smoking hot and stinking. That's a Scotch dinner. 'Oh!' she cried, losing her dignity in the sudden interest of a new idea. 'Oh, Carmina, do you remember the Italian boy, and his song?'

Here was one of those tests of her memory for trifles, applied with a child's happy abruptness, for which Ovid had been waiting. He listened eagerly. To his unutterable relief, Carmina laughed.

'Of course I remember it!' she said. 'Who could forget the boy who sings and grins and says, *gimmee haypenny*?'

'That's it!' cried Zo. 'The boy's song was a good one in its way. I've learnt a better in Scotland. You've heard of Donald, hav'nt you?'

'No.'

Zo turned indignantly to her father. 'Why didn't you tell her of Donald?'

Mr. Gallilee humbly admitted that he was in fault. Carmina asked who Donald was, and what he was like. Zo unconsciously tested her memory for the second time.

'You know that day,' she said, 'when Joseph had an errand at the grocer's, and I went along with him, and Miss Minerva said I was a vulgar child?'

Carmina's memory recalled this new trifle, without an effort. 'I know,' she answered; 'you told me Joseph and the grocer weighed you in the great scales.'

Zo delighted Ovid by trying her again. 'When they put me into the scales, Carmina, what did I weigh?'

'Nearly four stone, dear.'

'Quite four stone. Donald weighs fourteen. What do you think of that?'

Mr. Gallilee once more offered his testimony. 'The biggest Piper on my lord's estate,' he began, 'comes of a Highland family, and was removed to the Lowlands by my lord's father. A great player ——'

'And *my* friend,' Zo explained, stopping her father in full career. 'He takes snuff out of a cow's horn. He shovels it up his fat nose with a spoon, like this. His nose wags. He says, "Try my sneeshin." Sneeshin's Scotch for snuff. He boos till he's nearly double when uncle Northlake speaks to him. Boos is Scotch for bows. He skirls on the pipes—skirls means screeches. When you first hear him, he'll make your stomach ache. You'll get used to that—and you'll find you like him. He wears a purse and a petticoat; he never had a pair of trowsers on in his life; there's no pride about him; he'll let you pull his nose, and smack his legs ——'

Here, Ovid was obliged to bring the biography of Donald to a close. Carmina's enjoyment of Zo was becoming too keen for her strength; her bursts of laughter grew louder and louder—the wholesome limit of excitement was being rapidly passed. 'Tell us about your cousins,' he said, by way of effecting a diversion.

'The big ones?' Zo asked.

'No; the little ones, like you.'

'Nice girls—they play at everything I tell 'em. Jolly boys—when they knock a girl down, they pick her up again, and clean her.'

Carmina was once more in danger of passing the limit. Ovid made another attempt to effect a diversion. Singing would be comparatively harmless in its effect—as he rashly supposed. 'What's that song you learnt in Scotland?' he asked.

'It's Donald's song,' Zo replied. '*He* taught me.'

At the sound of Donald's dreadful name, Ovid looked at his watch, and said there was no time for the song. Mr. Gallilee suddenly and seriously sided with his step-son. 'How she got among the men after dinner,' he said, 'nobody knows. Lady Northlake has forbidden Donald to teach her any more songs; and I have requested him, as a favour to me, not to let her smack his legs. Come, my dear, it's time we were home again.'

Well intended by both gentlemen—but too late. Zo was ready for the performance; her hat was cocked on one side; her plump little arms were set akimbo; her round eyes opened and closed facetiously in winks worthy of a low comedian. 'I'm Donald,' she announced; and burst out with the song. *We're gayly yet, we're gayly yet; We're not very fou, but we're gayly yet: Then sit ye awhile, and tippie a bit; For we're not very fou, but we're gayly yet.* She snatched up Carmina's medicine glass, and waved it over her head with a Bacchanalian screech. 'Fill a brimmer, Tammie! Here's to Redshanks!'

'And pray who is Redshanks?' asked a lady, standing in the doorway.

Zo turned round—and instantly collapsed. A terrible figure, associated with lessons and punishments, stood before her. The convivial friend of Donald, the established Missus of Lord Northlake, disappeared—and a polite pupil took their place. 'If you please, Miss Minerva, Redshanks is nick-name for a Highlander.' Who would have recognised the singer of '*We're gayly yet*,' in the subdued young person who made that reply?

The door opened again. Another disastrous intrusion? Yes, another! Teresa appeared this time—caught Zo up in her arms—and gave the child a kiss that was heard all over the room. 'Ah, mia Giocosa!' cried the old nurse—too happy to speak in any language but her own. 'What does that mean?' Zo asked, settling her ruffled petticoats. 'It means,' said Teresa, who prided herself on her English, 'ah, my Jolly.' This to a young lady who could slit a haggis! This to the only person in Scotland, privileged to smack Donald's legs! Zo turned to her father, and recovered her dignity. Maria herself could hardly have spoken with more severe propriety. 'I wish to go home,' said Zo.

Ovid had only to look at Carmina, and to see the necessity of immediate compliance with his little sister's wishes. No more laughing, no more excitement, for that day. He led Zo out himself, and resigned her to her father at the door of his rooms on the ground floor.



Cheered already by having got away from Miss Minerva and the nurse, Zo desired to know who lived downstairs; and, hearing that these were Ovid's rooms, insisted on seeing them. The three went in together.

Ovid drew Mr. Gallilee into a corner. 'I'm easier about Carmina now,' he said. 'The failure of her memory doesn't extend backwards. It begins with the shock to her brain, on the day when Teresa removed her to this house—and it will end, I feel confident, with the end of her illness.'

Mr. Gallilee's attention suddenly wandered. 'Zo!' he called out, 'don't touch your brother's papers.'

The one object that had excited the child's curiosity was the writing-table. Dozens of sheets of paper were scattered over it, covered with writing, blotted and interlined. Some of these leaves had overflowed the table, and found a resting-place on the floor. Zo was amusing herself by picking them up. 'Well!' she said, handing them obediently to Ovid, 'I've had many a rap on the knuckles for writing not half as bad as yours.'

Hearing his daughter's remark, Mr. Gallilee became interested in looking at the fragments of manuscript. 'What an awful mess!' he exclaimed. 'May I try if I can read a bit?' Ovid smiled. 'Try by all means; you will make one useful discovery at least—you will see that the most patient men on the face of the civilised earth are Printers!'

Mr. Gallilee tried a page—and gave it up before he turned giddy. 'Is it fair to ask what this is?' he said.

'Something easy to feel, and hard to express,' Ovid answered.

These ill-written lines are my offering of gratitude to the memory of an unknown and unhappy man.'

'The man you told me of, who died at Montreal?'

'Yes.'

'You never mentioned his name.'

'His last wishes forbade me to mention it to any living creature. God knows there were pitiable, most pitiable, reasons for his dying unknown! The stone over his grave only bears his initials, and the date of his death. But,' said Ovid, kindling with enthusiasm, as he laid his hand on his manuscript, 'the discoveries of this great physician shall benefit humanity! And my debt to him shall be acknowledged, with the admiration and the devotion that I truly feel!'

'In a book?' asked Mr. Gallilee.

'In a book that is now being printed. You will see it before the New Year.'

Finding nothing to amuse her in the sitting-room, Zo had

tried the bedroom next. She now returned to Ovid, dragging after her a long white staff that looked like an Alpenstock. 'What's this?' she asked, 'A broomstick?'

'A specimen of rare Canadian wood, my dear. Would you like to have it?'

Zo took the offer quite seriously. She looked with longing eyes at the specimen, three times as tall as herself—and shook her head. 'I'm not big enough for it, yet?' she said. 'Look at it, Papa! Benjulia's stick is nothing to this.'

That name—on his sister's lips—had a sound revolting to Ovid. 'Don't speak of him!' he said irritably.

'Mustn't I speak of him?' Zo asked, 'when I want him to tickle me?'

Ovid beckoned to her father. 'Take her away now,' he whispered—'and never let her see that man again.'

The warning was needless. The man's destiny had decreed that he and Zo were never more to meet.

## CHAPTER LXII.

BENJULIA'S servants had but a dull time of it, poor souls, in the lonely house. Towards the end of the year, they subscribed among themselves to buy one of those wonderful Christmas Numbers—presenting regularly the same lovely ladies, long-legged lovers, and corpulent children, flaming with festive colours—which have become a national institution: say, the pictorial plum puddings of the English nation.

The servants had plenty of time to enjoy their genial newspaper, before the dining-room bell disturbed them.

For some weeks past, the master had again begun to spend the whole of his time, in the mysterious laboratory. On the rare occasions when he returned to the house, he was always out of temper. If the servants knew nothing else, they knew what these signs meant—the great man was harder at work than ever; and in spite of his industry, he was not getting on so well as usual.

On this particular evening, the bell rang at the customary time—and the cook hastened to get the dinner ready. The footman turned to the dresser, and took from it a little heap of newspapers; carefully counting them before he ventured to carry them upstairs. This was Doctor Benjulia's regular weekly supply of medical literature; and here, again, the mysterious man presented an incomprehensible problem to his fellow-creatures. He subscribed to every medical publication in London—and he never read one of them! The footman cut the leaves; and the master,

with his forefinger to help him, ran his eye up and down the pages; apparently in search of some announcement that he never found—and, still more extraordinary, without showing the faintest sign of disappointment when he had done. Every week, he briskly shoved his unread periodicals into a huge basket, and sent them downstairs as waste paper.

The footman took up the newspapers and the dinner together—and was received with frowns and curses. He was abused for everything that he did in his own department, and for everything that the cook had done besides. ‘Whatever the master’s working at,’ he announced, on returning to the kitchen, ‘he’s farther away from hitting the right nail on the head than ever. Upon my soul, I think I shall have to give warning! Let’s relieve our minds. Where’s the Christmas Number?’

Half an hour later, the servants were startled by a tremendous bang of the house-door which shook the whole building. The footman ran upstairs: the dining-room was empty; the master’s hat was not on its peg in the hall; and the medical newspapers were scattered about in the wildest confusion. Close to the fender lay a crumpled leaf, torn out. Its position suggested that it had narrowly missed being thrown into the fire. The footman smoothed it out, and looked at it.

One side of the leaf contained a report of a lecture. This was dry reading. The footman tried the other side, and found a review of a new medical work.

This would have been dull reading too, but for an Extract from a Preface, stating how the book came to be published, and what wonderful discoveries, relating to peoples’ brains, it contained. There were some curious things said here—especially about a melancholy deathbed at a place called Montreal—which made the Preface almost as interesting as a story. But what was there in this to hurry the master out of the house, as if the devil had been at his heels?

Doctor Benjulia’s nearest neighbour was a small farmer named Gregg. He was taking a nap that evening, when his wife bounced into the room, and said, ‘Here’s the big doctor gone mad!’ And there he was truly, at Mrs. Gregg’s heels, clamouring to have the horse put to in the gig, and to be driven to London instantly. He said, ‘Pay yourself what you please’—and opened his pocket-book, full of bank-notes. Mr. Gregg said, ‘It seems, sir, this is a matter of life and death.’ Whereupon he looked at Mr. Gregg—and considered a little—and, becoming quiet on a sudden, answered, ‘Yes, it is.’

‘On the road to London, he never once spoke—except to him-

self—and then only from time to time. It seemed, judging by what fell from him now and then, that he was troubled about a man and a letter. He had suspected the man all along; but he had nevertheless given him the letter—and now it had ended in the letter turning out badly for Doctor Benjulia himself. Where he went to in London, it was not possible to say. Mr. Gregg's horse was not fast enough for him. As soon as he could find one he took a cab.

The shopman of Mr. Barrable, the famous publisher of medical works, had just put up the shutters, and was going downstairs to his tea, when he heard a knocking at the shop door. The person proved to be a very tall man, in a violent hurry to buy Doctor Ovid Vere's new book. He said, by way of apology, that he was in that line himself, and that his name was Benjulia. The shopman knew him by reputation, and sold him the book. He was in such a hurry to read it, that he actually began in the shop. It was necessary to tell him that business hours were over. Hearing this, he ran out, and told the cabman to drive as fast as possible to the Parthenon Club.

The library waiter at the Club found Doctor Benjulia in the library, busy with a book. He was quite alone; the members, at that hour of the evening, being generally at dinner, or in the smoking-room. The man whose business it was to attend to the fires, went in during the night, from time to time, and always found him still in the same corner. It began to get late. He finished his reading; but it seemed to make no difference. There, he sat—wide awake—holding his closed book on his knee, seemingly lost in his own thoughts. This went on till it was time to close the club. They were obliged to disturb him. He said nothing; and went slowly down into the hall, leaving his book behind him. It was an awful night, raining and sleeting—but he took no notice of the weather. When they fetched a cab, the driver refused to take him to where he lived, on such a night as that. He only said, 'Very well; go to the nearest hotel.'

The night porter at the hotel let in a tall gentleman, and showed him into one of the bedrooms kept ready for persons arriving late. Having no luggage, he paid the charges beforehand. About eight o'clock in the morning, he rang for the waiter—who observed that his bed had not been slept in. All he wanted for breakfast was the strongest coffee that could be made. It was not strong enough to please him when he tasted it; and he had some brandy put in. He paid, and was liberal to the waiter, and went away.

The policeman on duty, that day, whose beat included the

streets at the back of Fairfield Gardens, noticed in one of them, a tall gentleman walking backwards and forwards, and looking from time to time at one particular house. When he passed that way again, there was the gentleman still patrolling the street, and still looking towards the same house. He waited a little, and watched. The place was a respectable lodging house, and the stranger was certainly a gentleman, though a queer one to look at. It was not the policeman's business to interfere on suspicion, except in the case of notoriously bad characters. So, though he did think it odd, he went on again.

Between twelve and one o'clock in the afternoon, Ovid left his lodgings, to go to the neighbouring livery stables, and choose an open carriage. The sun was shining and the air was brisk and dry, after the stormy night. It was just the day when he might venture to take Carmina out for a drive.

On his way down the street, he heard footsteps behind him, and felt himself touched on the shoulder. He turned—and discovered Benjulia. On the point of speaking resentfully, he restrained himself. There was something in the wretch's face that struck him with horror.

Benjulia said, 'I won't keep you long; I want to know one thing. Will she live or die?'

'Her life is safe—I hope.'

'Through your new mode of treatment?'

His eyes and his voice said more than his words. Ovid instantly knew that he had seen the book; and that the book had forestalled him in the discovery to which he had devoted his life. Was it possible to pity a man whose hardened nature never pitied others? All things are possible to a large heart. Ovid shrank from answering him.

Benjulia spoke again.

'When we met that night at my garden gate,' he said, 'you told me my life should answer for her life, if she died. My neglect has not killed her—and you have no need to keep your word. But I don't get off, Mr. Cvid Vere, without paying the penalty. You have taken something from me, which was dearer than life. I wished to tell you that—I have no more to say.'

Ovid silently offered his hand.

Benjulia's head drooped in thought. The one generous protest of the man whom he had injured, spoke in that outstretched hand. He looked at Ovid.

'No!' he said—and walked away.

Leaving the street, he went round to Fairfield Gardens, and rang the bell at Mr. Gallilee's door. The bell was answered by a polite old woman—a stranger to him among the servants.

'Is Zo in the house?' he inquired.

'Nobody's in the house, sir. It's to be let, if you please, as soon as the furniture can be moved.'

'Do you know where Zo is? I mean, Mr. Gallilee's youngest child.'

'I'm sorry to say, sir, I'm not acquainted with the family.'

He waited at the door, apparently hesitating what to do next. 'I'll go upstairs,' he said suddenly; 'I want to look at the house. You needn't go with me; I know my way.'

'Thank you kindly, sir!'

He went straight to the schoolroom. The repellent melancholy of an uninhabited place had fallen on it already. The plain furniture was not worth taking care of: it was battered and old, and left to dust and neglect. There were two common deal writing desks, formerly used by the two girls. One of them was covered with splashes of ink: varied here and there by barbarous caricatures of faces, in which dots and strokes represented eyes, noses, and mouths. He knew whose desk this was, and opened the cover of it. In the recess beneath were soiled tables of figures, torn maps, and dogeared writing books. The ragged paper cover of one of these last, bore on its inner side a grotesquely imperfect inscription:—*my cop book zo*. He tore off the cover, and put it in the breast pocket of his coat.

'I should have liked to tickle her once more,' he thought, as he went downstairs again. The polite old woman opened the door, curtsying deferentially. He gave her half a crown. 'God bless you, sir!' she burst out, in a gush of gratitude.

He checked himself, on the point of stepping into the street, and looked at her with some curiosity. 'Do you believe in God?' he asked.

The old woman was even capable of making a confession of faith politely. 'Yes, sir,' she said, 'if you have no objection.'

He stepped into the street. 'I wonder whether she's right?' he thought. 'It doesn't matter; I shall soon know.'

The servants were honestly glad to see him, when he got home. They had taken it in turn to sit up through the night; knowing his regular habits, and feeling the dread that some accident had happened. Never before had they seen him so fatigued. He dropped helplessly into his chair; his gigantic body shook with shivering fits. The footman begged him to take some refreshment. 'Brandy, and raw eggs,' he said. These being brought to him, he told them to wait until he rang—and locked the door when they went out.

After waiting until the short winter daylight was at an end, the footman ventured to knock, and ask if the master wanted

lights. He replied that he had lit the candles for himself. No smell of tobacco smoke came from the room; and he had let the day pass without going to the laboratory. These were portentous signs. The footman said to his fellow servants, 'There's something wrong.' The servants looked at each other in vague terror. One of them said, 'Hadn't we better give notice to leave?' And the other whispered a question: 'Do you think he's committed a crime?'

Towards ten o'clock, the bell rang at last. Immediately afterwards they heard him calling to them from the hall. 'I want you, all three, up here.'

They went up together—the two women anticipating a sight of horror, and keeping close to the footman. The master was walking quietly backwards and forwards in the room: the table had pen and ink on it, and was covered with writings. He spoke to them in his customary tones; there was not the slightest appearance of agitation in his manner.

'I mean to leave this house, and go away,' he began. 'You are dismissed from my service, for that reason only. Take your written characters from the table; read them, and say if there is anything to complain of.' There was nothing to complain of. On another part of the table there were three little heaps of money. 'A month's wages for each of you,' he explained, 'in place of a month's warning. I wish you good luck.' One of the women (the one who had suggested giving notice to leave) began to cry. He took no notice of this demonstration, and went on. 'I want two of you to do me a favour before we part. You will please witness the signature of my Will.' The sensitive servant drew back directly. 'No!' she said, 'I couldn't do it. I never heard the Death-Watch before in winter time—I heard it all last night.'

The other two witnessed the signature. They observed that the Will was a very short one. It was impossible not to notice the only legacy left; the words crossed the paper, just above the signatures, and only occupied two lines: 'I leave to Zoe, youngest daughter of Mr. John Gallilee of Fairfield Gardens, London, everything of which I die possessed.' Excepting the formal introductory phrases, and the statement relating to the witnesses—both copied from a handy book of law, lying open on the table—this was the Will.

The female servants were allowed to go downstairs; after having been informed that they were to leave the next morning. The footman was detained in the dining-room.

'I am going to the laboratory,' the master said; 'and I want a few things carried to the door.'

The big basket for waste paper, three times filled with letters and manuscripts; the books; the medicine chest; and the stone jar of oil from the kitchen—these, the master and the man removed together; setting them down at the laboratory door. It was a still cold starlight winter's night. The intermittent shriek of a railway whistle in the distance, was the only sound that disturbed the quiet of the time.

‘Good night!’ said the master.

The man returned the salute, and walked back to the house, closing the front door. He was now more firmly persuaded than ever that something was wrong. In the hall, the women were waiting for him. ‘What *does* it mean?’ they asked. ‘Keep quiet,’ he said; ‘I’m going to see.’

In another minute, he was posted at the back of the house, behind the edge of the wall. Looking out from this place, he could see the light of the lamps in the laboratory streaming through the open door, and the dark figure of the master coming and going, as he removed the objects left outside into the building. Then the door was shut, and nothing was visible but the dim glow that found its way to the skylight, through the white blind inside.

He boldly crossed the open space of ground, resolved to try what his ears might discover, now that his eyes were useless. He posted himself at the back of the laboratory, close to one of the side walls.

Now and then, he heard—what had reached his ears when he had been listening on former occasions—the faint whining cries of animals. These were followed by new sounds. Three smothered shrieks, succeeding each other at irregular intervals, made his blood run cold. Had three death-strokes been dealt on some suffering creatures, with the same sudden and terrible certainty? Silence, horrible silence, was all that answered. In the distant railway there was an interval of peace.

The door was opened again; the flood of light streamed out on the darkness. Suddenly, the yellow glow was spotted by the black figures of small swiftly-running creatures—perhaps cats, perhaps rabbits—escaping from the laboratory. The tall form of the master followed slowly, and stood revealed watching the flight of the animals. In a moment more, the last of the liberated creatures came out—a large dog, limping as if one of its legs was injured. It stopped as it passed the master, and tried to fawn on him. He threatened it with his hand. ‘Be off with you, like the rest!’ he said. The dog slowly crossed the flow of light, and was swallowed up in darkness.



The last of them that could move was gone. The death shrieks of the others had told their fate.

But still, there stood the master alone—a grand black figure, with its head turned up to the stars. The minutes followed one another: the servant waited, and watched him. The solitary man had a habit, well known to those about him, of speaking to himself; not a word escaped him now; his upturned head never moved; the bright wintry heaven held him spell-bound.

At last, the change came. Once more the silence was broken by the scream of the railway whistle.

He started like a person suddenly roused from deep sleep, and went back into the laboratory. The last sound then followed—the locking and bolting of the door.

The servant left his hiding-place: his master's secret, was no secret now. He hated himself for eating that master's bread, and earning that master's money. One of the ignorant masses, this man! Mere sentiment had a strong hold on his stupid mind; the remembrance of the poor wounded dog, companionable and forgiving under cruel injuries, cut into his heart like a knife. His thought, at that moment, was an act of treason to the royalty of Knowledge,—‘I wish to God I could lame *him*, as he has lamed the dog!’ Another fanatic! another fool! Oh, Science be merciful to the fanatics, and the fools!

When he got back to the house, the women were still on the look-out for him. ‘Don’t speak to me now,’ he said. ‘Get to your beds. And, mind this—let’s be off to-morrow morning before *he* can see us.’

There was no sleep for him when he went to his own bed.

The remembrance of the dog tormented him. The other lesser animals were active; capable of enjoying their liberty and finding shelter for themselves. Where had the maimed creature found a refuge, on that bitter night? Again, and again, and again, the question forced its way into his mind. He could endure it no longer. Cautiously and quickly—in dread of his extraordinary conduct being perhaps discovered by the women—he dressed himself, and opened the house door to look for the dog.

Out of the darkness on the step, there rose something dark. He put out his hand. A persuasive tongue, gently licking it, pleaded for a word of welcome. The crippled animal could only have got to the door in one way; the gate which protected the enclosure must have been left open. First giving the dog a refuge in the kitchen, the footman—rigidly performing his last duties—went out to close the gate.

At his first step into the enclosure he stopped, panic-stricken.

The starlit sky over the laboratory was veiled in murky red. Roaring flame, and spouting showers of sparks, poured through the broken skylight. Voices from the farm raised the first cry—Fire! fire!’

At the inquest, the evidence suggested suspicion of incendiarism and suicide. The papers, the books, the oil betrayed themselves as combustible materials, carried into the place for a purpose. The medicine chest was known (by its use in cases of illness among the servants) to contain opium. Adjourned inquiry elicited that the laboratory was not insured, and that the deceased was in comfortable circumstances. Where were the motives? One intelligent man, who had drifted into the jury, was satisfied with the evidence. He held that the desperate wretch had some reason of his own for first poisoning himself, and then setting fire to the scene of his labours. Having a majority of eleven against him he gave way, and consented to a merciful verdict of death by misadventure. The hideous remains of what had once been Benjulia, found Christian burial. His brethren of the torture-table, attended the funeral in large numbers. Vivisection had been beaten on its own field of discovery. They honoured the martyr who had fallen in their cause.

### CHAPTER LXIII.

THE life of the New Year was still only numbered by weeks, when a modest little marriage was celebrated—without the knowledge of the neighbours, without a crowd in the church, and without a wedding-breakfast.

Mr. Gallilee (honoured with the office of giving away the bride) drew Ovid into a corner before they left the house. ‘She still looks delicate, poor dear,’ he said. ‘Do you really consider her to be well again?’

‘As well as she will ever be,’ Ovid answered. ‘There has been time lost which no skill and no devotion can regain. I will make her a happy woman. Leave the rest to me.’

Teresa and Mr. Mool were the witnesses; Maria and Zo were the bridesmaids: they were waiting to go to church, until one other eagerly expected person joined them. There was a general inquiry for Miss Minerva. Carmina astonished everybody, from the bridegroom downwards, by announcing that circumstances prevented her best and dearest friend from being present. She smiled and blushed as she took Ovid’s arm. ‘When we are man and wife, and I am quite sure of you,’ she whispered, ‘I will tell

*you*, what nobody else must know. In the mean time, darling, if you can give Frances the highest place in your estimation—next to me—you will only do justice to our best friend.'

She had a little note hidden in her bosom, while she said those words. It was dated on the morning of her marriage: 'When you return from the honeymoon, Carmina, I shall be the first friend who opens her arms and her heart to you. Forgive me if I am not with you to-day. You know that you can trust me now. But we are all human—Don't tell your husband.'

It was her last weakness. Carmina never had to make excuses for Miss Minerva again.

There might have been a moment's sadness, when the married pair went away to their happy new life, but for Zo. Polite Mr. Mool, bent on making himself agreeable to everybody, paid his court to Mr. Gallilee's youngest daughter. 'And who do you mean to marry, my little Miss, when you grow up?' the lawyer asked with feeble drollery.

Zo looked at him in grave surprise. 'That's all settled,' she said; 'I've got a man waiting for me.'

'Oh, indeed! And who may he be?'

'Donald!'

'That's a very extraordinary child of yours,' Mr. Mool said to his friend, as they walked away together.

Mr. Gallilee absently agreed. 'Has my message been given to my wife?' he asked.

Mr. Mool sighed and shook his head. 'Messages from her husband are as completely thrown away on her,' he answered, 'as if she was still in the asylum. In justice to yourself, consent to an amicable separation, and I will arrange it.'

'Have you seen her?'

'I insisted on it, before I met her lawyers. She declares herself to be an infamously injured woman—and, upon my honour, she proves it, from her own point of view. "My husband never came near me in my illness, and took my children away by stealth. My children were so perfectly ready to be removed from their mother, that neither of them had the decency to write me a letter. My niece contemplated shamelessly escaping to my son, and wrote him a letter vilifying his mother in the most abominable terms. And Ovid completes the round of ingratitude by marrying the girl who has behaved in this way." I declare to you, Gallilee, that was how she put it! "Am I to blame," she said, "for believing that story about the girl's mother? It's acknowledged that the man made love to her—the rest is a matter of opinion. Was I

wrong to lose my temper, and say what I did say to this so-called niece of mine? Yes, I was wrong, there: it's the only case in which there is a fault to find with me. But had I no provocation? Have I not suffered? I will have nothing more to do with the members of my heartless family. The rest of my life is devoted to intellectual society, and the ennobling pursuits of science. Let me hear no more, sir, of you and your employers." She rose like a queen, and bowed me out of the room. I declare to you, my flesh creeps when I think of her.'

'If I leave her now,' said Mr. Gallilee, 'I leave her in debt.'

'Give me your word of honour not to mention what I am going to tell you,' Mr. Mool rejoined. 'If she needs money, the best man in the world has offered me a blank cheque to fill in for her—and his name is Ovid Vere.'

As the season advanced, two social entertainments which offered the most complete contrast to each other, were given in London on the same evening.

Mr. and Mrs. Ovid Vere had a pleasant little dinner party to celebrate their return. Teresa (advanced to the dignity of house-keeper) insisted on stuffing the tomatoes and cooking the macaroni with her own hand. The guests were Lord and Lady Northlake; Maria and Zo; Miss Minerva and Mr. Mool. Mr. Gallilee was present as one of the household. While he was in London, he and his children lived under Ovid's roof. When they went to Scotland, Mr. Gallilee had a cottage of his own (which he insisted on buying) in Lord Northlake's park. He and Zo drank too much champagne at dinner. The father made a speech; and the daughter sang, 'We're gayly yet.'

In another quarter of London, there was a party which filled the street with carriages, and which was reported in the newspapers the next morning.

Mrs. Gallilee was At Home to Science. The Professors of the civilised universe rallied round their fair friend. France, Italy, and Germany bewildered the announcing servants with a perfect Babel of names—and Great Britain was grandly represented. Those three superhuman men, who had each had a peep behind the veil of creation, and discovered the mystery of life, attended the party and became centres of three circles—the circle that believed in 'protoplasm,' the circle that believed in 'bioplasm,' and the circle that believed in 'atomised charges of electricity, conducted into the system by the oxygen of respiration.' Lectures and demonstrations went on all through the evening, all over the magnificent room engaged for the occasion. In one corner, a fair philosopher

in blue velvet and point lace, took the Sun in hand. 'The sun's life, my friends, begins with a nebulous infancy and a gaseous childhood.' In another corner, a gentleman of shy and retiring manners converted 'radiant energy into sonorous vibrations'—themselves converted into sonorous poppings by waiters and champagne bottles at the supper table. In the centre of the room, the hostess solved the serious problem of diet; viewed as a method of assisting tadpoles to develop themselves into frogs—with such cheering results that these last lively beings joined the guests on the carpet, and gratified intelligent curiosity by explorations on the stairs. Within the space of one remarkable evening, three hundred illustrious people were charmed, surprised, instructed, and amused; and when Science went home, it left a *conversazione* (for once) with its stomach well filled. At two in the morning, Mrs. Gallilee sat down in the empty room and said to the learned friend who lived with her,

'At last, I'm a happy woman!'

(*The End.*)

MAR 31 1915

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